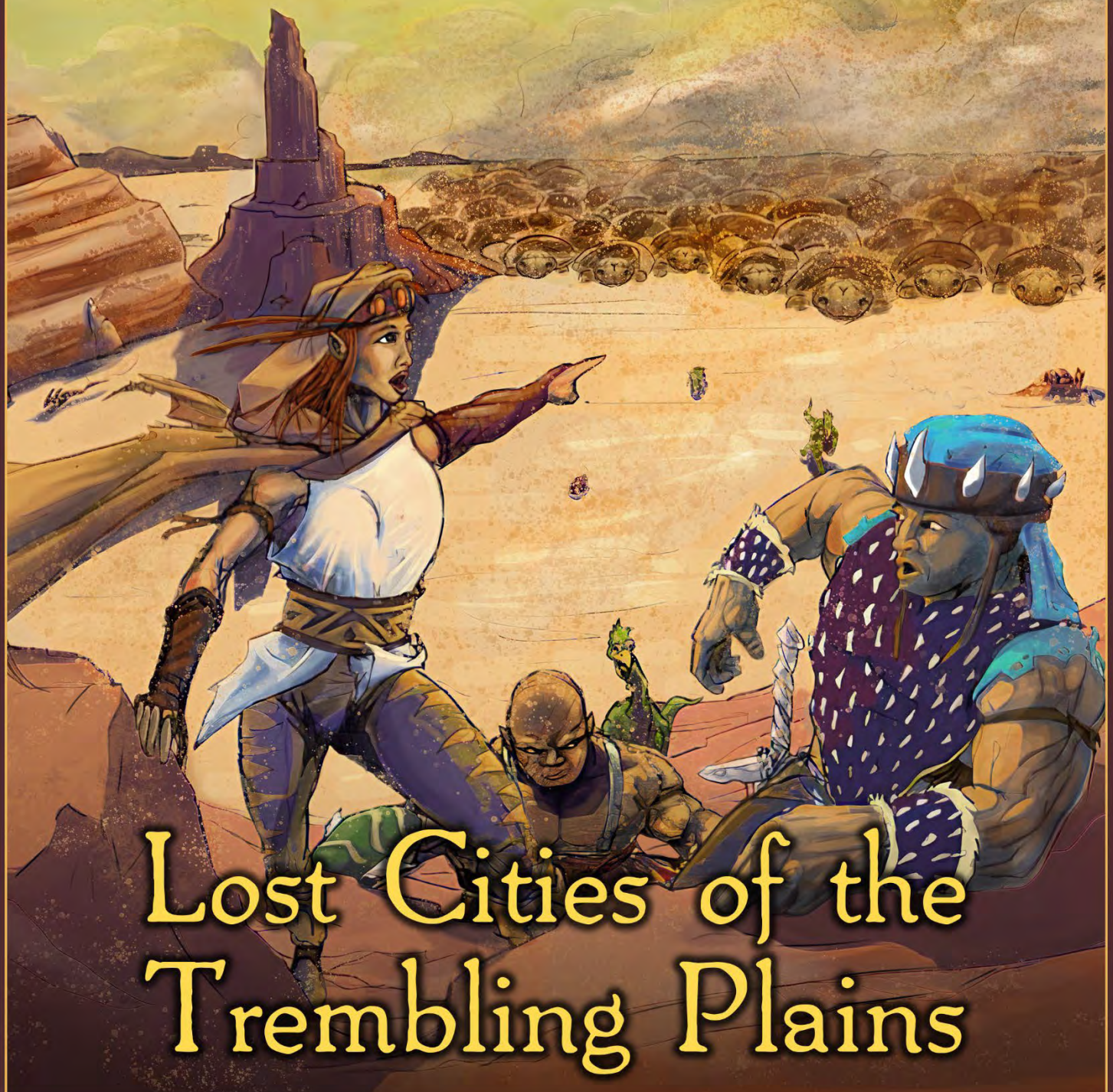




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CAMPAIN SETTING



# Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains

# Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains

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This book has been a long time coming.

Begun in the early 2000's by the previous Athas.org team, *Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains* was begun nearly 20 years ago. The writers took many disjoint ideas from the *Wanderer's Chronicle* and other canon sources and developed a deep and compelling story for the lands north of the Tyr Region. For various reasons, progress stalled in 2017 and the book remained in its unfinished form on the internet, unknown to many Dark Sun fans.

As we were wrapping up the *Dead Lands* project, the conversation among the *Pristine Tower Development Team* turned to what we would work on next. After working for so long on the *Dead Lands* - located to the south of the Tyr Region - it seemed appropriate to next work on the lands north of the Tyr Region. The depth and potential of the material was clear even in the unfinished drafts and partially developed maps and imagery, and several members of the Dark Sun community even joined the *Pristine Tower* team specifically to help with the *Forgotten North* books, of which *Lost Cities* is only the first.

We've given *Lost Cities* the same treatment we've given to all of the other fanon content we've included in our publications: a full reorganization of its text, several thorough editing passes, loads of new and refurbished art and maps, and the completion of the last remaining sections of unfinished text.

*Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains* was begun in the heyday of the revised 3rd edition of *Dungeons & Dragons*, and now it has finally been finished just as the revised 5th edition of *Dungeons and Dragons* is being released. While we have worked hard to change its content to be edition-agnostic, *Lost Cities* was always deeply 3.5e-centric, and traces of those rules can still be found throughout the book. We've come to see these last traces as a feature of the book, however, informing the book's contents and helping the *Forgotten North* stand apart from the *Tablelands* with its own regional identity.

While *Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains* was worked on by two separate teams of dedicated volunteers separated by decades, one thing they both share is love for the project, and I hope that love for the material and the Dark Sun setting is clear in this book. Enjoy!

- Adam Cieszlak, *Pristine Tower Development Group*.



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## Chapter One: Introduction

### **The Price of Freedom**

**Father, tell me the story about the night I was born.**

*Again? Aye. It was the Coldnights season in the Trembling Plains, and your mother was swollen up with you in her belly, but the House had business for me to do in Ket. I wanted to reach Azeth's Rest in time for your birth, but the east wind mired the road in silt. When I finally passed Fort Ral, the road was busy with travelers to the season's festival. They clogged my way and I could not get around them. Then I saw him.*

**The broken man.**

*Yes, many of his bones were broken. Bandits had taken everything he had, even his clothes. But he was still breathing. The other travelers were walking past him. A southbound mekillot wagon nearly trampled him, and I heard the driver say, he's almost dead, anyway. Another traveler stopped for an instant, but then said, hurry, there might be more bandits out there.*

**But you helped the broken man.**

*I am Azeth. I follow the winds, and the winds blew this man into my path.*

**Why did the others not help him?**

*They do not hear the winds, or they do not listen to them.*

**Tell the story.**

*I wanted to be home to see you and your mother, and the rest of the team wanted to get home as well, but we stayed a day until I was confident that I could move the man without killing him. Bandages and Kurnan herbs turned him around, but I didn't know if he would survive the journey northward on our crodlu. He needed to lie in a bed, and the only bed for a hundred miles was south to Fort Ral.*

**So you went back.**

*At Fort Ral, I sold the broken man to an innkeeper for one silver piece.*

**Slaves usually cost more.**

*A lot more. But this one was broken.*

**Could you have paid the innkeeper to take care of the broken man?**

*Yes, but she'd have pocketed the money, and let him die the moment my shadow disappeared from her horizon. I'd asked for less than a silver piece, she would not have nursed him back to health as carefully. Once she paid silver for him, she gained an interest in his life.*

**What did you do with the silver piece?**

*You know very well what I did with the silver piece. I strung it on a necklace, and it was my first gift to you, the moment I saw you. You are wearing it this moment, silly girl.*

**Tell me the end of the story again.**

*You must never spend that silver piece. It is the price of a man's freedom.*

- Georio of Arnesh, House Azeth trader

## Welcome to the Trembling Plains

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*"Why do they call it the Trembling Plainsss? The mekillotsss. Herdsss of hundredsss, ssshaking the earth when they passs..."*

- Mok'uahi'ssh, trader and caravan driver for House Azeth, Trade Nest

*"Lost Cities? We never lost our cities. Perhaps you were lost."*

- Annoyed tavern keeper in Azeth's Rest.

The Trembling Plains take their name from the vast mekillot stampedes that shake the plains during early Fruitbirth season. While the term "Trembling Plains" specifically refers to the long strip of scrubland extending southwest from Silt Side to west of Draj and then curving up north and then west of the Forest Ridge, the larger Trembling Plains Region includes the surrounding lands and communities. The residents of the region rarely make use of the term "Trembling Plains," unless speaking with outsiders. Instead, they either simply say "the region" when necessary (i.e., "Hordes of trin overrun the whole region in Flamesky.") or refer to specific parts of the area, such as Whistlegap, the Broken Deep, or the Storm Coast.

The Trembling Plains, however, are often said to lie in the "Forgotten North" by those in the Tablelands, a concept that often irritates or amuses its inhabitants. The Forgotten North is said to encompass both the

Trembling Plains region and the Barrier Wastes - the region that contains the Glowing Desert, Scorpion Plains, and Troll Grave Chasm, and is home to the Bandit Kingdoms. The lands of the Forgotten North were often referred to as lying in the larger "Jagged Cliffs Region" in the ancient past, but that region also included other lands further north, and now rarely appears outside the Wanderer's maps and the knowledge vaults of the Rhul-thaun.

The greatest reason that the lands north of the Tablelands are referred to as "Forgotten" might be the existence of the "Lost" cities of Kurn and Eldaarich. Settled near the end of the Cleansing Wars and ruled by mighty sorcerer-kings, both city-states became increasingly insular after the Dragon collected his first levy, and eventually both cut off trade and relations with the city-states of the Tablelands, finally fading from memory and becoming "lost" centuries ago.

## How to Use This Book in Your Campaign:

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This book gives you what you need to run adventures in the Trembling Plains region in your own Dark Sun campaign.

### Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter One introduces the Trembling Plains as a geographic region and provides a glossary of useful terms.

### Chapter Two: A Brief History

This chapter offers a brief history of the region, from the Blue Age to the Age of Heroes.

### Chapter Three: Lay of the Land

This chapter details the Trembling Plains themselves, from the Last Steppe to the Blood Prairie. Chapter Three also describes areas that most affect the Trembling Plains, such as Daskinor's Dim Islands and the Snow Crown Mountains, and those areas most affected by the Trembling Plains, such as the Kurnlands and Rohorind Forest.

### Chapter Four: Seasons

The region's drastic seasonal weather varies greatly, causing many creatures and inhabitants to leave the plains entirely during the seasons that they find most inhospitable. Chapter Four shows how the five seasons

## *Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains VI.1*

of the Trembling Plains region affects the inhabitants and their activities, travel, and encounters.

### **Chapter Five: Peoples**

Animals and nomadic peoples dominate the Trembling Plains. Chapter Five introduces the principal inhabitants of the region - the Eloy - and details their clans, politics, and relationships with other peoples living in or near this region.

### **Chapter Six: Living Settlements**

Chapter Six looks at Azeth's Rest, the Trembling Plains' only permanent year-round settlement, and at the settlements at the Trembling Plains' edge: South Guard, Winter Nest, Fort Stench, and the trade outposts of Silt Side and Fort Meraan. This chapter also offers a brief overview of the city-states of Kurn and Eldaarich.

### **Chapter Seven: Dead Cities**

Life dominates the Trembling Plains themselves, but death and ruin dominate the shattered cities at the

Plains' edges. The largest and most impressive cities of what is now the Trembling Plains region have been dead for King's Ages, destroyed around the time of the Cleansing Wars. Some of the undead inhabitants of these cities continue to fight out their ancient wars with each other, some plot revenge upon the living, and some seek trade relations.

### **Chapter Eight: Flora and Fauna**

Chapter Eight contains detailed descriptions of flora and fauna local to the region, as well as relevant information on what purposes the herbs and plants might serve.

### **Chapter 9: Player Handouts**

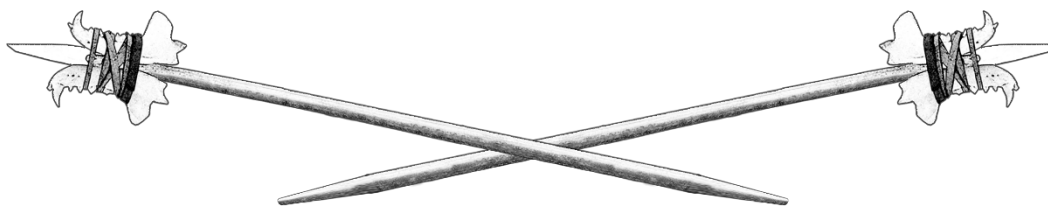
To simplify giving out background information to players, this chapter contains player handouts on several key regions and settlements.

## **Companion Books**

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In this book we reference the following books:

- *Dark Sun 3.5e Core Rulebook* provides essential details on the setting and the flora and fauna of Athas.
- *Faces of the Forgotten North* (hereafter abbreviated as FFN) provides information on important NPCs, new feats, monsters, gear, spells, powers, and prestige classes pertinent to the Trembling Plains.





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## Chapter Two: A Brief History

The Trembling Plains region includes the “Lost Cities” of Kurn, Eldaarich, Hogalay, and Thorlo. These four great cities of the Green Age were ruined during the Cleansing Wars, although two of them - Kurn and Eldaarich - were rebuilt by Keltis and Daskinor, and resettled by their Cleansing War armies.

### **A Note Regarding Historical Periods & Inconsistencies**

Dramatic world-changing events break Athasian history into periods such as “the Blue Age,” “the Rebirth,” etc., that do not neatly start and stop between King’s Ages, or even between years.

There are almost as many different ways to identify the historical periods as there are historians. For example, some speak of the Blue Age as beginning in the first world age, while others speak of the Blue Age as covering all time prior to the year of Island’s Agitation in the 7th World Age.

The Green Age is even more problematic, since while most astronomers say the Green Age began when the sun turned from blue to yellow, most historians say that the Green Age began as the Rebirth Races began to use psionics. The end of the Green Age creates even more controversy: Rajaat’s disciples characterize the “Time of Magic” as beginning in the 84th King’s Age, corresponding with some of Rajaat’s discoveries that he kept secret for over three thousand years. Arcane magic did not begin to affect events on Athas in general, or in the Trembling Plains specifically, until the 124 th King’s Age, which is when most historians say that the Time of Magic began. At the other extreme, most historians treat the Time of Magic as part of the Green Age, extending the Green Age all the way until when the sun turned from yellow to crimson. The Wanderer carefully avoids taking sides in this debate in his writings, describing the events that led up to the Time of Magic without actually stating when the Time of Magic began.

Historians in Tyr, Balic, and Kurn characterize the current historical period as the “Age of Heroes,” but those that did so in Draj, Nibenay, and Urik disappeared or suffered public execution, so most others continue to speak of these days as “the Age of the Sorcerer-Kings.”

## **The Blue Age**

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### **7th World’s Age**

#### **-14,103 Year of Island’s Agitation**

Basrai is founded as a naval station between Tyr’agi and Lusare. Basrai’s gates sit only 25 feet above the water level.

#### **-14,072 Year of Ral’s Vengeance**

The First of Wars ends as the nature-masters defeat the nature-benders and their elemental cleric allies.

### **8th World’s Age**

#### **-14,027 Year of Friend’s Reverence**

The nature-masters of Tyr’agi accidentally create the Brown Tide, ending the Blue Age.

#### **-14,026 Year of Island’s Agitation**

Surviving nature-masters create the Pristine Tower to destroy the Brown Tide. This action changes the sun from blue to yellow, destroying the Rhulisti civilization and bringing about the Rebirth. The ocean’s receding waters leave what used to be Basrai’s water port high in the mountaintops.

Last use of “Island” and “Ocean” in the World’s Age Calendar.

## **The Green Age**

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#### **-14,025 Year of Priest’s Fury**

Beginning of the Green Age. The new races of the Rebirth - humans, gnomes, dwarves, elves, and others - appear across the face of Athas. Some among the new peoples rename formerly halfling cities to Giustenal and Tyr; others have a harder time scratching out a living.

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### **-14,015 Year of Desert's Slumber**

Daskinor is born as one of the first trueborn human children in a cave in the Dragon's Crown Mountains.

### **-14,004 Year of Desert's Fury**

Tanysh is founded by the tribal human nation calling themselves Tanysh. Giustenal, still inhabited by halflings, draws various Rebirth tribes through trade and cooperation, who call themselves Remaan.

### **-13,963 Year of Guthay's Agitation**

Psionics have become commonplace among children born to the Rebirth tribes. Psionic children are born more and more commonly in the surviving halfling enclaves.

Daskinor uses *true mind switch* for the first time.

Kadiran Firehand, a powerful chieftain of the Tanysh people, renames the "World's Age" calendar to "King's Age," declaring himself the first King of Men. Tanysh Empire is founded.

## **9th King's Age**

### **-13,962 Year of Ral's Fury**

Various Rebirth tribes adopt the use of "King's Age."

### **-13,953 Year of Enemy's Vengeance**

Dwarves living south of the Snow Crown Mountains resettle on a nearby mesa, seeking refuge from Tanysh humans who have begun raiding their neighbors and found the village - later to become the city - of Hoyalay.

### **-13,923 Year of Mountain's Defiance**

Surviving Rhulisti colonists from Lusare discover shallow warm caverns, perfect for growing fungi, deep beneath Basrai's original sea-gates. The original port gates remain in use for soar-whales, but Basrai builds a set of gates at the new ground level, where a forest has taken root.

### **-13,918 Year of Ral's Vengeance**

Troll sages from Hen Gisaz revisit their makeshift orrery Star Rock, bringing news of the first sighting of the Messenger by a Tyrian astronomer. The comet appears every 45 years until the 190th King's Age, when it fails to appear in the year of Enemy's Slumber and the cycle is mysteriously broken.

Gonngvaz I the Goblinfather founds the city of Nidhuzaki in the Goblinfather's Hollow in the White Mountains.

### **-13,886 Year of Guthay's Agitation to -13,885 Year of Ral's Fury**

Kurn is founded by elves. The iconic seven alabaster towers of Kurn are constructed.

## **10th King's Age**

### **-13,857 Year of Mountain's Fury**

Gonngvaz the Goblinfather dies. His children almost immediately declare war on the trolls of Hen Gisaz and their village in Goblinfather's Hollow.

## **11th King's Age**

### **-13,784 Year of Desert's Slumber**

Nidhuzaki finally conquers Hen Gisaz, and the surviving trolls flee north, resettling in caves beneath Mounts C'thor and Iezrok in the eastern Buranic Range. Nidhuzaki continues to avoid its potential succession crisis by invading Kurn and Hoyalay.

The wars against Kurn and Hoyalay are disasters, with goblin armies slaughtered in the surrounding forests. Hoyalay routes the invasion and marches to lay siege to Nidhuzaki itself. To support the city during the siege, Nidhuzaki's Earth clerics tunnel a pass to the western side of the mountains.

One of the great-grandsons of Gonngvaz I the Goblinfather declares himself Gonngvaz II, subdues his family members, and sues for peace with Hoyalay and Kurn, forfeiting any claims on the lands beyond the White Mountains and securing a permanent peace with the city-states. Nidhuzaki flourishes under the "Goblinfather's Peace," using its western gate to expand into the other side of the White Mountains.

### **-13,765 Year of Guthay's Contemplation**

Rajaat is born among the pyreen; despite being blessed with a tremendous intellect, his body is deformed and his conscience is twisted, setting him apart from his brethren and causing him great distress.

After discovering a rich vein of copper and black decorative stone south of Hen Gisaz, Nidhuzaki founds the mining colony of Whal Khodzem.

### **-13,736 Year of Mountain's Vengeance**

Gonngvaz II dies, leading to resumed hostility between the goblin cities and their neighbors.

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### **34th King's Age**

#### **-12,025 Year of Friend's Reverence**

The orrery at Star Rock is finally completed by the trolls.

### **42nd King's Age**

#### **-11,345 Year of Guthay's Agitation**

After a series of devastating defeats by Hogalay, a popular uprising overthrows the Nidhuzaki mindbenders ruling Whal Khodzem, establishing a joint theocracy of the Earth and Ash cults. Mindbenders and Fire worshippers are declared heretics and hounded from the city. Whal Khodzen declares an eternal peace with Hogalay. Survivors of the Fire cult and their supporters migrate to a wide, fertile valley south of Whal Khodzem, and found the city of Uzhdra.

### **55th King's Age**

#### **-10,387 Year of Ral's Reverence**

Thri-kreen, a race previously thought of as unintelligent, migrate from the Crimson Savanna to the Tyr Region. Though short-lived and alien in appearance, the thri-kreen possess great wisdom and insight. The king of Tyr welcomes them with open arms.

### **66th King's Age**

#### **-9,569 Year of Wind's Defiance**

Mareet, Lawmaker of Saragar, is visited by a time-traveler from the future. He tells the king of impending doom to Athas before disappearing. Obsessed with the warning, Mareet orders his most powerful psionics, a young human from Tyr named Thesik, and an elf of Ra'gelyn named Kosveret, to breach the time stream and determine the nature of the warning.

#### **-9,559 Year of Priest's Fury**

Barani, a psionically gifted young human from the shores of Marnita, enrolls at Saragar's psionic academy and joins Thesik and Kosveret in their efforts.

#### **-9,549 Year of Desert's Slumber to -9,548 Year of Priest's Defiance**

The psionics breach the time barrier and, over a year of psionic visitations to the future, learn of the coming Cleansing Wars, Rajaat, and the nature of defiling

magic. Mareet wants to warn all of Athas to prevent the adoption of arcane magic, but the psionics disagree and dominate their leader's mind.

#### **-9,545 Year of Mountain's Fury**

Thesik, Kosveret, and Barani, through their puppet Lawmaker Mareet, begin isolating Saragar and the Marnita Sea from the rest of the world. The withdrawal of the heart of their civilization devastates the Geshur people both culturally and economically, and causes a localized northern economic collapse, as Marnita's former domains struggle to adapt. The Heartland Tanysh economy also crashes, with the collapse suddenly opening up southern markets, leading to the "Southern Golden Age."

#### **-9,528 Year of Friend's Slumber**

"Mareet" names Thesik, Kosveret, and Barani Lawkeepers for life, then is allowed to naturally expire.

### **78th King's Age**

#### **-8,604 Year of Friend's Slumber**

After their tolerance of kreen in Tanysh lands is discovered, the current Lawmaker of Codesh is ordered by the Emperor to persecute the kreen, and orders the death of all their kind in Codesh and Urik. Many thri-kreen across the land leave Remaan cities to live in the wild. Migration of thri-kreen from the west comes to a halt. The First Tanysh Empire begins to collapse from cascading unrest, as the Melai declare independence and the Zethi break off from the empire's southern territory to form their own empire.

### **81st King's Age**

#### **-8,377 Year of Silt's Agitation**

Having studied the techniques of life-shaping, Rajaat makes the discovery that the life spark of all living things on Athas can be tapped and shaped, allowing for the form of magic he comes to call sorcery, but is not accountable to elemental lords or spirits of the land. Researching ways to use sorcery to transform himself into a higher being and fix his hideous appearance, Rajaat travels to a powerful nexus of life energy at the base of the Jagged Cliffs and begins using the overwhelming life energy there to power spells, developing the basics of sorcery.

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### **84th King's Age**

#### **-8,169 Year of King's Defiance**

After nearly two centuries of experiments, and dissatisfied with the power provided by tapping vegetation, Rajaat attempts to tap the life spark of Athas itself, but it proves too powerful and nearly kills him, flooding the Jagged Cliffs with dangerous magic and forming both Rajaat's Swamp and the Misty Border.

#### **-8,168 Year of Silt's Reverence to -7,976 Year of Desert's Contemplation**

After recovering, Rajaat begins traveling among the various halfling tribes, piecing together the history of the Rebirth and the location of the Pristine Tower.

### **86th King's Age**

#### **-8,003 Year of Silt's Vengeance**

Tanysh is abandoned by the living, being left as a massive necropolis. Yorum, Ysman, and Carsys all declare themselves the heirs of the Tanysh empire and engage in numerous civil wars in the ensuing millenia.

#### **-7,976 Year of Desert's Contemplation**

Rajaat arrives at the Pristine Tower, where he meets a group of halflings descended from the last nature-masters to remain at the Tower. Rajaat befriends the halflings and takes them on as his attendants, and with their assistance unlocks vaults underneath the tower that help him refine his control of sorcery. The descendants of these halflings would later become the Shadow People of the Black. Exploring the tower, Rajaat discovers the *Steeple of Crystals* and *Pearl of the Sunrise Sea*. The Time of Magic begins.

### **86th King's Age to 125th King's Age**

#### **-7,975 Year of Priest's Vengeance to -4,976 Year of Guthay's Reverence**

Rajaat refines sorcery into the path Dexter and path Sinister, or "preserving" and "defiling", coming to prefer defiling for being faster, easier, and more powerful. Combining the use of sorcery and the Way, Rajaat discovers the path to becoming an advanced being, but rejects it as a means of becoming the higher being he sought to be. His last hope for personal change dashed, Rajaat comes to reject everything that has come about since the Rebirth, including his own

works. All must be undone. Rajaat attempts to teach halflings sorcery to reclaim the world, but, discovering that halflings cannot master defiling magic, realizes he will be forced to rely on the Rebirth peoples to enact his plans to bring the world back to the Blue Age.

## **The Time of Magic**

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### **87th King's Age**

#### **-7,890 Year of Ral's Slumber**

Daskinor, under one of his cover identities, aids other powerful mindbenders in the creation of the *Planar Gate*, an artifact allowing limited passage to the Outer Planes. Daskinor's psionic power is severely weakened during its creation.

### **112th King's Age**

#### **-6,029 Year of Desert's Vegeance to -5,953 Year of Friend's Contemplation**

The copper vein in Juhudhuzar runs dry, causing the governors back in Vharat to withdraw their support.

The Juhudhuzar colonists found New Juhudhuzar in a secret valley six miles north of the old mines, abandoning the old city but retaining it as a "front" in the event of invasion.

#### **-5,207 Year of Guthay's Reverence**

After generations of being governed by powerful psions who would find an equally powerful spouse, then bear a child who would seek out an equally powerful spouse, the last guardian of Kurn is unable to select a suitable mate, and volunteers to become Kurn's first meorthy.

### **124th King's Age**

#### **-5,107 Year of Ral's Fury**

Commander Shafghaza of Juhudhuzar, during a spring expedition to assault the heretical city of Uzhdra, has the Earth clerics bury the main gate of Uzhdra with a series of avalanches and has the Ash clerics desolate the valley before the gate, reducing its forests to fields of smoking ash. He then withdraws his army beyond the valley, watching and waiting. Uzhdra's Fire worshippers send out scouts and search parties from their postern gates, attempting to find the

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invaders. Instead, they find a wasteland, and Shafghaza's carefully hidden spies map the locations of as many postern gates as they can. One by one, these are sealed by Shafghaza's Earth priests, while his troops fall upon Uzhdra's scouts, cutting them down.

### **-5,106 Year of Friend's Contemplation**

After six months of Shafghaza's siege, the inhabitants of Uzhdra have gradually consumed all their stockpiled food, and suffer hideously from depleted air. Shafghaza intends to remain outside Uzhdra until the next spring, but his soldiers grow restless, and the clan chiefs in Juhudhuzar become impatient to get their clansmen back, when a winter campaign force from Whal Khodzem arrives. Shafghaza wins the ensuing fight, but his troops suffer tremendous casualties, and Shafghaza is obliged to leave Uzhdra and return to Juhudhuzar with the survivors. The chiefs of several of the clans that lost the most warriors in the battle have Shafghaza poisoned. Despite the destruction of Whal Khodzem's yearly invasion force, and the long-awaited withdrawal of Shafghaza's army, there is little celebration in Uzhdra. Few goblins survive there, since cannibalism and oxygen depletion has left the city nearly depopulated. The few hundred emaciated survivors crawl out of the last unburied postern gate and scatter into the mountains, where most of them die in the snow.

### **-5,105 Year of Desert's Vengeance**

Survivors from Uzhdra arrive along the western face of the White Mountains, after being granted passage by Nidukhazi, and found the city of Ghozer. They are soon joined by discontented exiles from Juhudhuzar fleeing the fallout of Shafghaza's failed campaign and assassination.

### **-5,056 Year of King's Vengeance**

Carsys defeats Yorum and Ysmen, and declares the Second Tanysh Empire. The Carsys Skyship is developed, massively cutting cargo travel times and decorating Athasian skies with elegant psionic airships.

## **125th King's Age**

### **-4,976 Year of Guthay's Reverence**

After three millennia of study, Rajaan emerges from the Pristine Tower to teach sorcery to the Rebirth races. He teaches preserving magic openly, and defiling magic in secret to those of questionable character. For the next 1,500 years, Rajaan studies how arcane magic interacts with the Rebirth races, and ultimately decides that humans have the most potential of all to suit his needs.

### **-4,954 Year of Guthay's Agitation**

Daskinor is selected among the second class of Rajaan's students, becoming a preserver, but proves a slow learner.

## **126th King's Age to 133th King's Age**

### **-4,951 Year of Desert's Vengeance to -4,336 Year of Friend's Contemplation**

Zenith of the Time of Magic. Preservers become highly prevalent in Athasian society, training noble children and founding their own schools. Fraternities of preservers emerge to research new forms of magic and improve the world. The first side-effects of defiling are observed as regions that welcome them suffer crop failures and ecological collapse.

## **133h King's Age**

### **-4,359 Year of Ral's Agitation**

A massive earthquake strikes the Heartland. The struggling Geshur port cities of Bartigar and Eresat are devastated and partially sink into the Sunrise Sea, and cities from Kurn to Celik suffer structural damage. The northern economy further collapses as trade between Thorlo and the north is cut off. Widespread crop failures occur after cities turn to cheap but destructive defiling magic for repairs. The third volcano in the Charvass Peninsula erupts, blanketing the area with ash.

Lizardfolk raiders migrate south to attack Thorlo, as it is the last remaining airbreather city on the northern coast. In response, King Ungild VI of Thorlo conscripts giants from the nearby swampy islands into the army.

## **134th King's Age**

### **-4,337 Year of Ral's Fury**

All of Rajaan's best surviving students perish at the Pristine Tower in Rajaan's attempt to create champions. The accident creates the beings now known as Crimson. Daskinor had wanted to be part of the group, but had not advanced sufficiently in arcane magic.

### **-4,334 Year of Priest's Slumber**

Egendo of Carsys is born.

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### **-4,331 Year of Mountain's Agitation**

Tristero of Carsys is born.

### **-4,319 Year of King's Defiance**

Egendo and Tristero, only 15 and 12 years old, respectively, are sent by their parents to train at Hogalay's psionic academy because the southern Remaan and Melai academies are "too soft." They experience immense disdain from their dwarven teachers, warping their views of the dwarven race.

### **-4,316 Year of Guthay's Fury**

The brothers Egendo and Tristero, after returning home and gaining standing in Carsysh society, enroll as preservers under Rajaat, as members of one of the last groups of preserver students ever trained.

Egendo fails a transmutation spell during his early training and injures his arm while trying to stop it, which becomes a silver, scaled claw due to the Pristine Tower's mutating influence. Tristero, after proving less than adept with arcane magic, joins the small cadre of warriors being trained by Irikos and Dregoth.

### **-4,313 Year of Desert's Slumber**

Egendo draws Rajaat's personal attention and is invited to join his inner ranks of defilers. Egendo brings Tristero into Rajaat's inner circle as an elite commando trained for missions in the coming Preserver Jihad.

### **-4,275 Year of King's Agitation**

Rajaat begins a pre-emptive "jihad" against the preservers of Athas for the next thousand years. Preservers go into hiding while fighting a losing battle against Rajaat's followers. Daskinor assists. Hundreds of preservers at the Pristine Tower are massacred in the middle of their studies or daily activities by their own colleagues. Some lower ranking preservers choose self-preservation over morals and are spared, being regulated to support roles or conscripted into defiler training. After the massacre at the Pristine Tower, Rajaat gives a speech to his defiler students about the "corruption" of the preservers, and tasks his most competent students with duties as leaders of assassination squads, targeting independent preservers working as court advisors, school heads, or noble tutors. Journeyman preservers across Athas reel from the sudden chaos, with some blaming each other and many refusing to believe that Rajaat is behind the violence.

### **-4,274 Year of Silt's Fury**

Many polities refuse Rajaat's demands to turn over or arrest their resident preservers, and assassinations

against pro-preserver human officials and nobles begin.

### **-4,273 Year of Enemy's Contemplation**

The rulers of Kurn reach out to and express support for underground preserver groups.

## **135th King's Age**

### **-4,228 Year of Guthay's Defiance**

After dozens of successful covert assassinations and terrorist attacks on preserver-sympathizers, Egendo and Tristero are rewarded by Irikos, now known as the Left Hand of Rajaat, with extended life.

Egendo has his hair brittle and rendered silver like an old man's while saving Tristero from a preserver's withering spell. Tristero begins calling him Silvermane in jest, which catches on with their commando squad. Tristero, feeling overshadowed by his more magically adept brother, begins to grow distant to Egendo. Egendo, missing his brother's affections, adopts a ruthless persona similar to the Tanysh elders who abused him as a child, becoming infamous for his merciless and well-executed leadership.

The Wind Mages establish themselves as an underground group fighting the defilers.

## **141st King's Age**

### **-3,792 Year of Mountains' Agitation**

After a wandering Earth priest from Nidukhazi discovers a small silver vein in the area, the city founds the mining colony of Ruhrsar on the eastern side of the White Mountains.

## **143rd King's Age**

### **-3,591 Year of Enemy's Defiance**

Daskinor uses *true mind switch* for the last time.

## **144th King's Age**

### **-3,561 Year of Mountain's Agitation**

The worst snows of the 144th King's Age hit the White Mountains, burying Ruhrsar's only gate. In desperation, the city's rulers burn through all their timber and even the bodies of slave laborers to melt their way through the blockage.

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Facing starvation and being worked to death to clear the avalanche, Ruhrsar's surviving slaves revolt, killing the city's prince and many of the civilians before they are all killed. The survivors begin eating the bodies of the dead, and the mass death allows them enough oxygen to survive the month. A small party finally clears the blockage and races to Ghozer, the nearest Goblin city, for aid.

Eager to seize the silver mine without drawing Nidukhazi's wrath, Ghozer sends a commando squad of psionic psychopoters to teleport in and secure the mine. They use the Way to summon a denizen of the Gray and let it loose on the remaining survivors, but the entity - a crimson - devours attackers and defenders alike, and Ruhrsar becomes one of Athas' first haunted ruined cities.

### **-3,531 Year of Priest's Contemplation**

Rajaat sends all but a few of his students away. Using the power of the Pristine Tower and the mysterious *Dark Lens*, Rajaat creates his Champions. Each Champion is ordered to eliminate one specific race from the face of Athas in an effort to bring about the return of the Blue Age.

## **The Cleansing Wars**

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### **-3,531 Year of Priest's Contemplation**

Rajaat invades Ulyan and besieges Nagarvos after it refuses to hand over the preserver Pandruj, beginning the Cleansing Wars. Nagarvos falls and its population is massacred.

### **-3,530 Year of Wind's Vengeance**

Egendo destroys the dwarven electrum mining colony of Toganay with poison gas, but is unaware some of its population survives in magical stasis. Daskinor massacres the goblin settlement of Gzhabakr.

### **-3,521 Year of Desert's Defiance**

While campaigning along the southern Sunrise Sea near what will later be called the Great Salt Flat, Keltis exploits various elemental magics in an attempt to destroy deep-sea lizardfolk settlements.

Individuals across the continent begin to notice the gradual reduction of sea levels and the appearance of strange, loamy silt that defies all known natural laws in these bodies of water.

## **145th King's Age**

### **-3,312 Year of Desert's Slumber**

Fall of Zhavahr, last of the goblin cities in the Ringing Mountains. Using spells and powers of exceptional might, Daskinor satisfies himself that he has exterminated every last goblin in the Ringing Mountains. Leaving a small garrison behind to make sure that the empty goblin holes do not repopulate, Daskinor departs for the White Mountains, which he has been told are "infested" with goblin cities.

Unable to attack the northern undersea lizardfolk settlements directly with his human armies, Keltis summons sea serpents to attack lizardfolk between Shault and the shore of the Sunrise Sea. His targets include an underwater pyramid near the future site of Draj, and an underwater city that the lizardfolk had won from halflings, located near present-day Fort Ral.

The pyreen Tretai arrives at and uses his powers to hide the Blue Pool of the Ancients from the invading Cleansing Armies.

### **-3,306 Year of Silt's Vengeance**

Egendo attacks the dwarven town of Charvass, flooding it with molten lava, and chases the refugees to Hogalay. A Hogalayan military detachment sent to aid the town finds it already destroyed, and Hogalay under siege, and decides to resettle the ruins, hoping to hide from Egendo's army.

### **-3,303 Year of Ral's Reverence**

After more than three years of siege against Hogalay, Egendo plans a frontal assault. Hogalay's Earth King captures and imprisons Egendo underground within a cyst.

### **-3,302 Year of Friend's Agitation**

Borys of Ebe takes command of Egendo's army, finally triumphing over Hogalay. Most dwarves flee northward. Some refugees from the destruction of Charvass return to the Charvass Peninsula. Rajaat leaves Egendo in the cyst, replacing Egendo with Borys as his 13th Champion.

### **-3,226 Year of Ral's Reverence**

Borys, following reports of a surviving Hogalayan dwarven military detachment, arrives at the rebuilt Charvass and kills all the adults, unaware that one minder, Moratuc, was tasked with hiding with their children in the mines.



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### **152nd King's Age**

#### **-2,951 Year of Ral's Fury**

Goblin survivors from the Ringing Mountains found Agzhabar.

### **153rd King's Age**

#### **-2,829 Year of Friend's Slumber**

Albeorn's forces arrive at Kurn, besieging the city. The siege lasts six years, claims over a third of Albeorn's army, and sees him wounded numerous times fighting the city's thirteen guardian meorties; Albeorn manages to destroy only seven of the meorties.

#### **-2,823 Year of King's Vengeance**

Albeorn destroys most of Kurn and all but one of its spires with a powerful sonic spell, but wemic mercenaries corner Albeorn and temporarily destroy his body, tearing him apart and casting his remains into the sea. Albeorn's battered army retreats.

### **154th King's Age**

#### **-2,791 Year of Mountain's Agitation**

Daskinor destroys False Juhudhuzar within a week of fighting, and buoyed by his first victory in these lands, presses northward to take Agzhabar, not realizing that the city was a false front.

Daskinor destroys Agzhabar, and using a technique of torture and desecration that he honed in his Ringing Mountains campaign, creates the first khvakhas in the White Mountains.

#### **-2,776 Year of Guthay's Fury**

His forces expanded by a new generation of local Tanysh conscripts, Daskinor marches on Whal Khozdem.

#### **-2,774 Year of Friend's Vengeance**

Daskinor destroys Whal Khozdem, and while some of his troops are still looting and torturing the captives, Daskinor sends outrunners to pursue those who escaped. The outrunners slaughter the refugees in front of the closed gates of Nidukhazi. The king of Niduhazi orders many citizens to be immured, burying them alive in a wall for questioning his decision to let the refugees die. Daskinor lays siege to Nidukhazi.

The Shroud of Martyrs first appears. Believers known as Martyrs flock to the artifact's master.

#### **-2,772 Year of Priest's Defiance**

After two years of siege and demoralizing attacks from the Martyrs, Daskinor's forces begin work on a ramp to reach Nidukhazi's gates.

#### **-2,766 Year of Enemy's Slumber**

After five years, Daskinor's ramp reaches Nidukhazi's gates, and his forces take the city, but thousands escape through a western tunnel, collapsing it behind them. Daskinor leaves most of his undead forces behind, and takes his living forces south, carefully searching the mountains for secret gates and for the Martyrs' leader.

#### **-2,765 Year of Guthay's Defiance**

Daskinor discovers and lays siege to True Juhudhuzar.

#### **-2,763 Year of Friend's Agitation**

During a terrible winter, Daskinor slays hundreds of his own mountain men to punish them for their dwindling morale. Despite desertions, weather, and the Martyrs' disruption of Daskinor's supply wagons, Juhudhuzar falls, but fighting continues in the city for five months. For the first time, Daskinor captures and tortures one of the Martyrs, and discovers how they operate.

#### **-2,762 Year of Desert's Fury**

After destroying Ghozer, the last goblin city in the Snow Crowns, Daskinor's troops discover Basrai's mountainside gates and mistake the halfling city for a goblin one, destroying it before Daskinor realizes the error. Daskinor orders some of his defilers to study the life-shaped tools found within, and keeps Basrai's destruction a secret from Rajaat. His army marches west towards Dhuzhak.

#### **-2,733 Year of Enemy's Contemplation**

Daskinor's forces are decimated by cunning traps, but manage to destroy Dhuzhak using living defiler engines called "unrosh." Unwilling to trust his own servants with such power, Daskinor orders the unrosh destroyed along with all those that assisted their creation; one unrosh avoids destruction and remains alive in the ruins. Daskinor sets a terrible curse on Dhuzhak, and pauses to regroup his forces and recruit. Tortured captives from Dhuzhak share rumors of goblins dwelling in the far south and east.

#### **-2,725 Year of Mountain's Vengeance**

Having reformed his body, Albeorn approaches Kurn again with a new army, burning the forests as they approach. The elves take refuge within Kurn's walls, but Albeorn's forces leave before the elves' mercenaries arrive, without having touched the city.

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Elves in Kurn begin to die of plague contracted during Albeorn's brief siege. Magic can only cure so many people. Even former allies of the elves begin to drive them from their cities. Elven communities across Athas begin to tribalize, going into hiding not only from Albeorn, but from each other, since unknown elven refugees are most likely to carry Albeorn's plague.

### **155th King's Age**

#### **-2,709 Year of Ral's Defiance**

Daskinor Goblin Death, 14th Champion of Rajaat, exterminates the last living goblin from the face of Athas. The second Champion to accomplish their task, Daskinor settles his army on the spot of his final victory, an extinct volcano riddled with caves where the last family of goblins had been hiding in hopes that Daskinor's army would stay in the mountains.

#### **-2,696 Year of Desert's Slumber**

Daskinor founds the city of Eldaarich on the site of his final Cleansing.

### **160th King's Age**

#### **-2,303 Year of Guthay's Defiance**

The gnomish nation of Udreegas falls and the Scorched Plateau is created. Gallard, 6th Champion of Rajaat, massacres the last of Athas' gnomes.

Keltis, Lizard Folk Executioner, arrives at Saragar despite the powers of Saragar's Mind Lords. The cleverness of the Mind Lords hides the entire population of lizardfolk from the Champion, and he soon leaves Saragar.

#### **-2,265 Year of Wind's Fury**

The great cities of Ebe, Waverly, and Arala are swallowed by the expanding Silt Sea, though later it recedes from Waverly. The nearby city of Bodach is spared, but becomes surrounded by silt.

#### **-2,258 Year of Ral's Fury**

Infuriated at her lack of progress, Rajaat turns research of the Inner Planes over to Qwith's subordinates. Shortly afterwards, an accident of unknown origins opens a gate to the Inner Planes and obsidian flows across Ulyan for hundreds of miles in every direction until the gate is plugged. Thousands die in the disaster. Those killed by obsidian rise as undead, animated by a mysterious power originating from the Inner Planes. Rajaat's servants rise as the rulers of this land,

becoming powerful thinking undead wizards and psionicists. The Dead Lands are formed.

### **161st King's Age**

#### **-2,214 Year of Ral's Vengeance**

Myron of Yorum, the Troll Scorcher, drives the trolls from the Kreegill Mountains.

### **162nd King's Age**

#### **-2,169 Year of Friend's Reverence**

Keltis, 10th Champion of Rajaat, believes he has exterminated the last of the lizardfolk. In reality, several tribes survive under the protection of the Mind Lords. He reports in good faith to Rajaat that his work is done.

Tectuktitlay's forces face the northern wemics in the battle of Two-Moons Cairn. After the battle, Tectuktitlay orders the building of a massive set of cairns to inter both wemic and human dead. Due to the more numerous wemic dead, the wemic cairn is larger; Tectuktitlay orders the cairns combined to avoid seeming to honor his foes with a larger cairn.

#### **-2,158 Year of Friend's Vengeance**

Keltis enters into a relationship with Sielba, and attempts to settle his army, the Kel Tas, in Yaramuke. The Kel Tas pitch tents outside the city, and remain there for decades.

-Battle of the Lions' Labyrinth. The northern wemic clans are broken and survivors are hunted down for the next several decades.

#### **-2,122 Year of Wind's Slumber**

Tectuktitlay, 9th Champion of Rajaat, destroys the last wemics on Athas.

#### **-2,117 Year of Enemy's Contemplation**

Tectuktitlay settles his Cleansing War army to found the city-state of Draj on a mud flat near the ruined city of Tanyes.

#### **-2,112 Year of Priest's Agitation**

Desiring to disassociate himself from Rajaat and the other Champions, Keltis leads the Kel Tas north to the ruins of the elven city of Kurn, where he decrees they will settle. The Kel Tas lack any sort of building or farming skills after twelve hundred years of fighting sea battles. Keltis commissions one of his army's quartermasters, Meraan Azeth, to obtain slaves and

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food from the Tablelands. Meraan Azeth eventually founds the merchant house of Azeth and the village of Azeth's Rest.

### **163rd King's Age**

#### **-2,096 Year of Silt's Contemplation**

Eldarich's ancestral cemeteries along the southern coast are abandoned to encroaching silt.

#### **-2,053 Year of King's Vengeance**

Myron of Yorum is replaced as Troll Scorcher by Manu of Deche, later known as Hamanu. He is given the sword the Scorcher, created by Rajaat, to complete his task.

### **164th King's Age**

#### **-2,026 Year of Friend's Contemplation**

Hamanu kills Windreaver, the last troll of Athas and king of his people. Rajaat assigns Hamanu to oversee the attack on the last known outpost of the Wind Mages, located on the Road of Fire. Hamanu, focused on other tasks, assigns one of his commanders, Merek the Wrong, to conduct the siege. Merek's victory over the Wind Mages is cut short as Haakar, the last of the Wind Mages, begins a ritual that kills almost every living thing on his island.

#### **-2,025 Year of Desert's Vengeance**

Rkard, the last dwarven king of Kemalok, is slain by Borys in mortal combat, though Borys himself is gravely injured. The Champion's attendants spirit him from the battlefield leaving his sword, the *Scourge*, still buried in the dwarf's chest. Before he can retrieve the sword, Hamanu tells Borys of Rajaat's true plans for Athas. Becoming aware that Rajaat intends to wipe out all races except the halflings, Borys leads the Champions in a rebellion against their master, a rebellion from which they emerge victorious. Rajaat's halfling servants are banished to the Black as punishment for siding with the Warbringer. Despite their power, the Champions cannot destroy Rajaat's mortal remains. Instead, Gallard separates the First Sorcerer's essence from his physical form, placing each in a separate location. Aided by the power of the *Dark Lens*, Gallard creates the Hollow, where he places Rajaat's essence. Gallard then creates a cyst of enchanted stone called the *Black Sphere* in which he places Rajaat's substance, and hides the *Black Sphere* in a location known only to himself and Borys. Sacha and Wyan, who remained loyal to their master, attempt to

breach the cyst before it is hidden away. Their plan is discovered and they are beheaded by Borys. Through the use of the *Dark Lens*, Borys rewards the remaining Champions by beginning their transformations into the advanced beings known as dragons. This process also links each of them to living vortices, which allows them to grant their followers clerical spells. The Champions realize that Rajaat's prison will not hold. Even segmented, Rajaat's power is supreme and he will one day escape his confinement. Hence, the Champions once again use the *Dark Lens* to transform Borys into the Dragon, whose power can keep Rajaat imprisoned for all time. Borys' transformation causes him to become temporarily insane, beginning a century of rampages across the land. In the confusion, two dwarven knights named Jo'orsh and Sa'ram steal the *Dark Lens*. The remaining sorcerers-kings each claim a city and barricade it from the rampaging Dragon.

## **The Brown Age**

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#### **-2024 Year of Priest's Slumber**

The Dragon obliterates what is left of the Tanysh peoples. Tanysh refugees who flee to Draj are assimilated or sacrificed by Tectuktitlay. The pyreen Faluay arrives at Blue Pool of the Ancients and becomes Tretai's mate.

#### **-1,971 Year of Friend's Fury**

Led by Abalach-Re, the sorcerer-kings storm Giustenal and kill Dregoth, Ravager of Giants, just before he is to become a full-fledged Dragon. The battle destroys the city, the land, and most of its population. Afterwards, Hamanu throws the Scorcher into the Silt Sea. With the aid of his high templar Mon Adderath, Dregoth is returned to life as an undead dragon king. The surviving populace is gathered soon after, and construction of New Giustenal begins underground.

### **165th King's Age**

#### **-1,948 Year of Desert's Vengeance**

The pyreen Woro-asbu arrives at the Blue Pool of the Ancients.

#### **-1,946 Year of Wind's Defiance**

Borys emerges from his insanity and learns that Rajaat's prison is on the verge of collapse. Soon after, he collects a levy of 1,000 slaves from each sorcerer-king, using their life-force to reseal the First Sorcerer's

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prison on a yearly basis. Although the southern sorcerer-monarchs were warned in advance, Keltis and Daskinor are taken by surprise by the Dragon's demands, and are forced to pay the first levy out of their own citizens. Hard-hit by the levies, Kurn and Eldaarich begin to empty as their citizens flee to the Trembling Plains. Keltis resolves never to use his own in such a way again, instead using all of his might and cunning to scrape up enough beings for sacrifice each year.

### **-1,912 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

House Azeth discovers False Juhudhuzar and realizes it has usable salt deposits and reliable local cisterns, and resettles it as Fort Meraan.

## **167th King's Age**

### **-1,741 Year of Ral's Agitation**

In an attempt to increase her power, Sielba, Queen of Yaramuke, attacks Urik. Hamanu easily defeats her army and personally slays the sorcerer-queen. On the heels of victory, Urik's army sacks Yaramuke and burns the city to the ground. To appease the Dragon's wrath for killing a sorcerer-queen, Hamanu presents Borys with a levy of Yaramuke's riches, which pleases the beast and spares Urik.

### **-1,722 Year of Silt's Defiance**

Borys uses the booty gained from Yaramuke to build Ur-Draxa, which becomes the greatest city in all of Athas. At the center of the city Borys places the Black Sphere for him and his city to protect.

### **-1,721 Year of Enemy's Reverence**

The sorcerer-kings call for a jihad against the druids of Athas. For the next two centuries the blood of druids across the land stains the sands red in what would be known as the Eradication.

## **168th King's Age**

### **-1,653 Year of Ral's Slumber**

The thri-kreen prophet Ka'Cha travels the Trembling Plains and attempts to deliver a message to Keltis.

### **-1,652 Year of Friend's Defiance**

The thri-kreen prophet Ka'Cha begins the first of several journeys across the Tablelands to spread the word of peace and enlightenment to the thri-kreen, as well as other races.

## **170th King's Age**

### **-1,555 Year of Guthay's Slumber**

Dregoth, Ravager of Giants, discovers the *Planar Gate*. After a decade of research, he uses the device to travel the Outer Planes of existence for the next nineteen centuries.

### **-1,506 Year of Wind's Slumber**

After being nearly wiped from the face of Athas, the remaining druids of the land meet at a secret location in the northern Tablelands and agree to go into hiding across Athas for the next 1,000 years.

## **171st King's Age**

### **-1,469 Year of Silt's Reverence**

Daskinor, king of Eldaarich, slips into insanity following this year's levy, and assembles a plan to attack the Dragon upon his return the following year. Borys learns of this plot and confronts Daskinor. Afterwards, the Dragon, not needing the levy to maintain Rajaat's prison, never returns. Keltis, king of Kurn, has an attack of conscience and denounces being a sorcerer-king. Over the next centuries he strives to become something more noble. Because of the actions of nearby Daskinor, Borys never returns to Kurn either, and both cities become isolated from the rest of Athas.

### **-1,464 Year of Desert's Slumber**

Kurnan scouts explore the Oronha Valley. After peaceful efforts to move the native halflings fail, Keltis resorts to violently displacing them, driving the survivors into the northern Rohorind Forest.

### **-1,450 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

Dwarves from Kurkika, seeking out their legendary homeland of Hogalay, arrive in Kurn and are welcomed as citizens.

## **174th King's Age**

### **-1,219 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

The elven tribe known as the Sand Zhackals take refuge in Kurn during a series of savage kreen attacks, eventually assimilating into Kurnan citizenry as the "Kurn" tribe.

## **175th King's Age**

### **-1,142 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

The Air Temple of Winter's Nest is constructed.

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### **176th King's Age**

#### **-1,088 Year of Dragon's Vengeance**

Gudra Gnuzdrning, future High Templar of the Takrits Order, is born.

### **177th King's Age**

#### **-987 Year of Mountain's Defiance**

Gudra Gnuzdrning uses *vampiric youthfulness* for the first time, after Daskinor ceases to prolong her life.

### **178th King's Age**

#### **-911 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

A harnaq matriarch is born to the Kurnan noble house Erinatth, which will still be alive in Free Year 13.

### **179th King's Age**

#### **-798 Year of Silt's Defiance**

Tarandas of Raam, a powerful mindbender and teacher known throughout the Tyr Region, disappears without a trace. Her students insist she has ventured through the Way into realms unseen by lesser beings.

#### **-787 Year of Silt's Contemplation**

An elven tribe that will become the Barber's Clave assimilates into Kurnan society.

Daskinor discovers that one of the Takrits Order templars (all related to him by blood to some degree) is a half-elf, and becomes convinced Eldaarich's elves are plotting against him. Daskinor arranges for a prominent elven chieftain, Hrales, to be appointed to a high-ranking position in the Savak Order, and holds the ceremony in Eldaarich's Market Ellipse. As most of the city's elves are gathered, Daskinor slaughters them all using the Way, leaving behind a bloody marsh in Ellipse, which the Halaban cover with sand. On the first night of a full Ral since the massacre, the buried pool bubbles back up, and the Blood Wraiths are unleashed upon Eldaarich, inflicting death by exsanguination on all who hear their cries. The Halaban begin the Fire Dawn ceremony, supposedly to contain these wraiths.

### **180th King's Age**

#### **-757 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

The Earth Temple of Eldaarich falls afoul of Daskinor after they fail to harden the local sandstone for use in construction. Templars using spells of elemental Air attack the temple and slay all the priests. Gachac, a mid-level Earth priest, reanimates as an Air krag.

Kurn abandons the original axe coat-of-arms used by Keltis' Cleansing army.

### **181st King's Age**

#### **-687 Year of Enemy's Slumber**

Draj, fearing belligerence from Eldaarich, cuts off all remaining contact with the northern cities, leading to the Tyr Region's name for the Trembling Plains, the "Forgotten North."

As a reaction to Draj's diplomatic isolation, a paranoid Daskinor seals Eldaarich off from all outside contact.

#### **-680 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

The Breaking of Shackles: the slaves are freed in Kurn.

### **182nd King's Age**

#### **-603 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

A summoned fiend goes berserk in Eldaarich, bringing the implications of real fiends to Daskinor's attention. He swiftly begins to summon these creatures to Athas as spies and assassins, bribing them with Eldaarich blood and souls.

Kurnan scholars discover the ruins of Hen Gisaz.

### **183rd King's Age**

#### **-543 Year of Guthay's Fury**

With the aid of a wizard named Besteren, Oronis (formerly known as Keltis) develops the *preserver metamorphosis* spell to counter Rajaat's vile sorcery. The spell nearly kills him, but in the end Oronis emerges as Athas' first avangion.

#### **-526 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

The Neshtap and Shtas launch an invasion of Kurn, but are repelled with help from the city's six ancient elven meorties, which instills a reverence for the meorties in the population.

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### **-487 Year of Ral's Fury**

Kurnans discover the Silvaraak aarakocra living in the White Mountains. Kurn's noble house of Aballu hires preservers to develop a strain of cotton that is faster growing and more hearty. The two failed strains - cottonweed and cottonwood - quickly spread uncontrollably across the Forgotten North. Oronis bans any sort of magical tampering with existing flora.

## **184th King's Age**

### **-480 Year of King's Fury**

Oronis gives the *preserver metamorphosis* spell to Nerad, a powerful preserver and master of the Way, who becomes Athas' second avangion.

### **-449 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

A large raiding force of Shtas and Neshtap invades the Last Steppe, attacking the Kurnan client village of Lyssaeon. A Black Brother captain named Edrites leads a fighting retreat which saves many of the villages, and is honored for their sacrifice in the rebuilt village.

### **-417 Year of Wind's Fury**

After revealing himself to the Veiled Alliance of Tyr, Nerad is discovered by King Kalak - who in turn contacts the Dragon. Borys later kills Nerad south of Tyr. In his grief, Oronis hides all copies of the *preserver metamorphosis* spell.

### **-402 Year of Silt's Contemplation**

The island on which Eldaarich sits - Kzel Unggrassag - is invaded by a massive horde of giants from the southwest, led by a powerful mindbender chief, Zegna. The templarates are forced to conscript freefolk and slaves to bolster the army, and Daskinor himself intervenes to slay Zegna, taking the weapon Zegna's Revenge as his own. The giants are repelled by heroic action at Fort Aatheb, and giant raids never again reach this intensity.

## **185th King's Age**

### **-387 Year of Friend's Vengeance**

The Halaban Order discovers that Eldaarish nobles have been secretly in possession of knowledge dating back to the Green Age and passing it down to their children, and enact a purge. Daskinor, incensed by this discovery, declares the current year as "Year Zero" and orders all information prior to this date to be destroyed. The Halaban stir up populist resentment against the nobles, but the fury escapes their control and degenerates into riots and pogroms against any

perceived intellectuals. Members of the noble class and educated non-templars are sent to be worked to death in the mines of Huuros.

### **-384 Year of Wind's Reverence**

By this year, over 15,000 Eldaarish citizens have died in the pogroms - a third of the city's population. Artisans and farmers are even targeted by the uncontrolled hysteria. The Neshtap, realizing that the city's means of production are endangered, forcibly relocate surviving artisans to "craft villages" outside the city, exploiting their enforcement of the city's isolation policy. They use this power to enact revenge on Halaban templars for trying to escape the chaos they let loose. Eldaarich collapses into civil war and cannibalism. By the time Daskinor re-establishes order, Eldaarich's population is reduced from 50,000 to 20,000, and its food production capacity is forever damaged with the destruction of the agricultural noble houses and artisans.

Abu Bdulag, an elvish merchant-prince among the Clearwater Tribe north of Celik, attempts to shortchange Uda Nadil (one of Daskinor's fragments or "inner demons") and is subjected to *mind seed* for his grift.

## **186th King's Age**

### **-295 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

The "Flaming Star", a meteorite from the stars, crashes into Eldaarich, centered on the Neshtap's old headquarters, Fort Colhyyma. Daskinor blames preservers for the destruction and hunts down the Veiled Alliance in Eldaarich. The old Market Ellipse area, between the destruction of the Earth Temple four centuries ago and the newly-formed crater, is abandoned. The Neshtap fully transfer their operations from inside Eldaarich to outside the city, with the destruction of their main fort inside the city.

## **187th King's Age**

### **-227 Year of King's Contemplation**

The Neshtap plant a *tree of life* at Camp 48 to aid in the production of silk.

### **-218 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

Dova, an aarakocra druid, chooses Dova's Peak as his guarded land. Liikris, a heretical cleric of Air who reveres "Lightning", and a small flock of his followers, are ostracized from Winter Nest, leaving to found Storm Peak.

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### **188th King's Age**

#### **-141 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

A tribe of gith build a fort atop the northern slope of Two Moons Cairn, attempting to tax the trade road, but are driven out by Kurnan templars. The Kurnan Green Brotherhood cuts a single-person footpath through the mountains to Winter's Nest with the permission of the aarakocra.

### **189th King's Age**

#### **-64 Year of Dragon's Slumber**

Kurn's Earth temple falls into disuse. A fearsome tarek named Rocklips discovers a well northwest of Azeth's Rest, and expands it into the oasis of Rocklips Gulp.

#### **-38 Year of Enemy's Contemplation**

The village and tribe of Cha'gruha is founded by refugees fleeing intertribal wars in the northern Rohorind Forest.

### **190th King's Age**

#### **-29 Year of King's Slumber**

Telhina, a druid from one of Draj's client villages, arrives at Stonegate Cascade, and becomes lovers with the Ruvoka Tzavjjja.

#### **-25 Year of Ral's Fury**

Bandits destroy the village of Tanner's Grove after it had been weakened by a trin attack, defiling the remaining trees. Kurn rebuilds and fortifies the oasis, which adopts a new name: Fort Stench.

#### **-18 Year of King's Fury**

An earthquake exposes the Temple of the Unfettered Mind to the surface, drawing the attention of the Sky Speakers kenku clan. The kenku initially try to kill the meerty abbot dwelling within, but it convinces them that their natural use of the Way makes them superior, and they adopt it as their shaman.

The Mudbridge between Fort Mudwatch and Southguard is extended, and has remained extended ever since.

#### **-15 Year of Guthay's Slumber**

King Kalak of Tyr attends the funeral of his favorite high templar, Mereth. Unknown to Kalak, Mereth did not die; she was a Kurnan double templar and staged her death.

#### **-1 Year of Desert's Slumber**

Through his investigations into Nerad's life and death, Korgunard - another powerful preserver and master of the Way - learns of Oronis and visits Kurn. Still reluctant to hand out the *preserver metamorphosis* spell, Oronis is nonetheless convinced by Korgunard to inscribe the spell into an ancient elven relic, which Korgunard would later turn into the *Annulus* and use to become Athas' third avangion.

Oronis withdraws his spies from Tyr, anticipating Kalak's use of the ziggurat; one spy warns Tyr's Veiled Alliance that the ziggurat will bring death to Tyr and empower Kalak, but provides no further specifics.

#### **1 Year of Priest's Defiance (Free Year 1)**

King Kalak of Tyr is slain by the *Heartwood Spear*. Tithian becomes king and frees the slaves. Tyr adopts the Free Year calendar. Spymaster Mereth assumes command of Kurn's School of Spies. House Azeth hires the Spinefist Giant tribe to attack Kel's Lot.

#### **2 Year Wind's Reverence**

Prodigy returns from her mission in Eldaarich and writes "Wisdom of Terror." Other Kurnan spies and wizards enter Eldaarich.

#### **3 Year of Dragon's Agitation**

Tzitlali, an outspoken Draj astrologer, calculates the sun will turn blue for an hour during the year of Friend's Agitation. Other Draj astrologers ridicule her announcement as absurd; no one examines her calculations.

Oronis marries Prodigy.

#### **4 Year of Mountain's Fury**

The Order activates an ancient artifact, the *Psionatrix*, nullifying psionics across the Tablelands and causing thri-kreen to be driven into an insane frenzy.

The avangion Korgunard is slain while trying to convince members of the Order to deactivate the *Psionatrix*. One of the members, a halfling named Pakk, consumes the avangion's remains.

Deep within the recesses of the Dragon's Crown mountains, the *Psionatrix* is deactivated and several members of the Order die.

Daskinor demands that all Eldaarish immediately stop using psionics. Eldaarich's psionic school closes; hundreds are imprisoned.

#### **6 Year of Silt's Vengeance**

Nureeak becomes leader of the community of Storm Peak.

Taina Azeth is born.

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### **7 Year of Enemy's Slumber**

Spymaster Andapho infiltrates the Kulag Order.

Corik Azeth, newly chosen leader of House Azeth, establishes trade relations with High Templar Kerillis of Eldaarich's Kulag fleet.

Daskinor establishes the Cheka Order for interrogations.

### **8 Year of Guthay's Defiance**

Gudra Gnuzdning takes over the organization of gladiatorial games in Eldaarich.

### **9 Year of Ral's Reverence**

Prodigy updates "Wisdom of Terror" based on refugee accounts.

The Haleban and Savak Orders collaborate to murder the High Templar of the Cheka Order after that order's interrogations begin to show suspects' innocence.

Corik Azeth institutes the Great Caravan.

A particularly harsh winter strikes Rifaak's Wall, and a heroic hunter named Dunik among the Sons of the Drake ventures high into the mountains to bring back game and ensure the tribe's survival. When he returns successful, he and his hunters supplant the tribe's longstanding Earth shaman rulers.

### **10 Year of Friend's Agitation**

The day of Blue Sun. Rajaan is freed and then reimprisoned; the Cerulean Storm is born; Tectuktitlay and Abalach-Re perish.

Discovering the secret of New Kurn, Prodigy, outraged that Oronis kept this secret from her, departs on a second mission to Eldaarich. A member of the Order recruits her.

Draji astronomers seek to examine Tzitlali's calculations but find that she has disappeared. Daskinor becomes catatonic with fear for a month.

### **11 Year of Desert's Fury**

The Dedys Consortium hires mercenaries to find out what lies north of Draji, and they discover Azeth's Rest.

The Trembling Plains suffer their first Tyr-storm, and Azeth's Rest in particular is badly damaged. Corik Azeth hires the Kurnan Makers Clave to rebuild the walls of Azeth's Rest.

Spymaster Andapho writes "Wisdom of the Kulag Fleet."

Lhonia Grey's Savak handlers sent her a summons to return to Eldaarich, which, as a wild talent, she ignores.

### **12 Year of Priest's Contemplation**

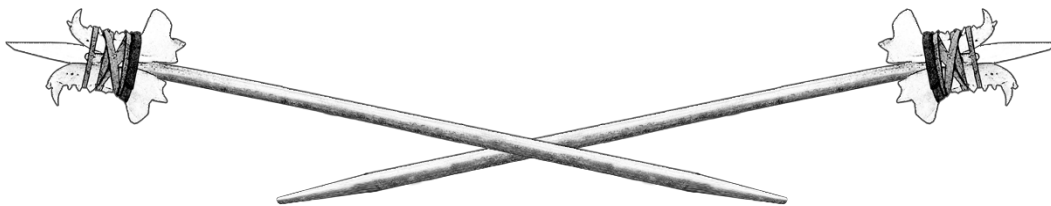
Dregoth's forces attack Raam during the "Day of Light." Since Hamanu has shut Urik's gates to strangers, and since Draji tends to sacrifice refugees, many starved and desperate Raamins flee northward into the Trembling Plains. Dregoth's scheme to disrupt divine spellcasting and become a god is foiled by a group of adventurers.

Prodigy writes "Letter to Oronis," baiting her former husband to declare war on the Order.

Spymaster Mereth writes "Wisdom of the Storm Coast."

### **13 Year of Wind's Vengeance**

Current year







## Chapter Three: The Lay of the Land

*"We cannot afford to ignore the Trembling Plains. This flat stretch of rich scrubland extends from the southern edge of Kurn's verdant belt, runs south past Azeth's Rest, and then curves northwest over the northern edge of the Ringing Mountains. It borders hundreds of miles of the Forest Ridge and lies within several days' travel of Draaj, Urik, and Raam.*

*Bordering on so many lands, and offering such generous grazing for herd animals and mounts, the Trembling Plains Region has become host to conflicts between creatures and peoples that otherwise would never have come into contact. Some of these conflicts have become seasonal events, such as the trin that come from the Hinterlands following the mekillot herds and attack the local inhabitants during Flamesky season when game runs thin. Other conflicts are almost perennial: the Trembling Plains serve as the buffer zone between Kurn and Eldaarich, the hunting grounds where Red Guards track down those who attempt to escape Eldaarich and the Dim Lands, and as the battleground between the bandits of the Glowing Desert and the trade houses.*

*Most importantly, the Trembling Plains offer easy travel and sufficient grazing ground for an entire army to pass unchecked from Draaj, Raam, or Urik right up to the very gates of Kurn."*

- "Wisdom of the Trembling Plains," by Spymaster Annippe, an excerpt from Wisdom of the Drylanders, the Kurnan spy manual.

### Geographic Overview

#### The Trembling Plains

Five major geographic regions comprise the Trembling Plains: the Last Steppe, Whistlegap, Hammer's Head, Giant's Hollow, and the Blood Prairie. The trade road runs through the largest of these areas, The Last Steppe, which extends 300 miles south by southwest from the Banding Slopes (near Kurn, just south of the White Mountains) in the northeast, past Azeth's Rest and Fort Ral, until the broken spires of Tembo Turrets come into view. West of Azeth's Rest, the Trembling Plains do not border on any settled lands until they reach the halfling forests beyond the Ringing Mountains. Southeast of the Last Steppe, the Whistlegap area stretches 60 miles southwest between two areas of badlands known as the Broken Deep and Tembo Turrets. To the southwest, Whistlegap connects to a broader area of the Trembling Plains known as Hammer's Head, which borders on the Tablelands to the south. North by northwest of Hammer's Head, an area of the Trembling Plains known as Giant's Hollow sits between the Ringing Mountains, the Forest Ridge, and the Broken Deep badlands. If one passes through a narrow neck of scrubland between the Forest Ridge and the Broken Deep, they will find themselves in the westernmost area of the Trembling Plains, the Blood Prairie.

The Trembling Plains are essentially flat, broken only occasionally by hillocks, expanses of rocky barrens,

and stony wastes in the east along the Silt Sea coast. The great ancient rivers have vanished or become wadi (seasonal streams that run with water briefly for a few weeks, drying up for the rest of the year). The trade road stretches north-south through the Last Steppe. In the north, the plains gradually give way to the rocky badlands and foothills of the White Mountains.

#### Life in the Trembling Plains

While life thrives here, civilization does not—at least not in forms that people of the Seven Cities of the Tablelands would recognize as civilization. As one travels west from the coast, clans of nomadic herders known as Eloy give way to similar societies of plains giants. Aside from those roads and landmarks noted on the map, the Trembling Plains have no villages, towns, forts, roads, or even any other enduring paths through this life-rich area, as the peoples of the Plains gave up long ago on attempting to build permanent structures. Other than Azeth's Rest, the yearly mekillot stampedes, trin rampages, and Windflood season rains have torn apart every structure in the Trembling Plains, and the ground, turned to mud by the Windflood rains, has swallowed up the foundations.

Halflings rarely venture from the Forest Ridge into the Blood Prairie because their forest provides everything that they need, and because the plains would deprive them of almost all of their advantages. Of the elf tribes,

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only the Moon Racers ever travel to the western ends of the Trembling Plains. Some Moon Racers speak of tari and renegade halflings that live underground in the Blood Prairie like rodents, but common wisdom holds that if such communities existed, they could not be permanent settlements, as the holes would fill up with water and the tunnels would collapse into mud during the heavy rains of Windflood season.

### Life in the Adjoining Barren Lands

The Trembling Plains abut a number of less fertile lands: the Barrier Wastes, the Shady Desert, Shevgar's Promontory, the Painted Forest, The Broken Deep, Longshank's Scablands, Tembo Turrets, the Kreegill Mountains, and the Sun's Fist - all discussed briefly in the various subsections below. These regions are largely devoid of plant life, but one can usually find

scattered tufts of spinifex grass and patches of cacti. Agave and yuccas grow in sheltered areas where winds are not too strong and zaal trees emerge from the dunes and rocky barrens at rare intervals.

The creatures living in these barren lands include silt serpents, mini-kanks, rasclinn, and packs of wild crodlu, gorak, dagorrans, and jhakar. Goraks and cha'thrangs (the cords from which are collected by dune traders) are found in the wastes, though these are not as common as in the deserts north of the White Mountains. Carnivores such as tembo, jhakar, driks, baazrags, dune reapers, inix, mastyrials, lirr, and scorpions of various kinds dwell also in these deserts, but often enter the Trembling Plains to hunt; hunting parties ranging from Eloy to Neshtap reavers often enter the deserts to stalk these carnivores. T'chowb and belgoi often follow the hunting parties through the desert, in case any stragglers become vulnerable.

## The Last Steppe

*"Kurnans turn everything upside down. The citizens work longer hours than the slaves and the nobles work longer hours than the citizens. We cannot fault the nobles if their "work" makes them look like children at play: hunting, racing in chariots, chatting with other nobles, playing war games, chasing birds, practicing archery, shopping for nicer chariots ... this is all very serious work, and someone has got to do it."*

- Ptoby, Tavern-keeper in Fort Stench

Only between Fort Ral and Conak's Rock do the Trembling Plains border any settled lands. The trade road, its side paths, and various wadi are the only permanent roads and pathways in the Trembling Plains. The eastern Trembling Plains contains the trade road, where one is more likely to encounter people from Kurn, Eldaarich, and the Tablelands.

### Conak's Rock

Jutting up from the roadside, this slanted scarp of granite dominates the lands south of Kurn. In the Green Age, the road south from Kurn was a mighty river. Over the centuries, the water eroded a promontory of exposed granite before shifting to the west and carving a channel down to the level of the plains. When the sun turned red and the river dried up, the scarp called Conak's Rock was left high and dry. When Keltis settled the ruins of Kurn after the Cleansing Wars, he established a small outpost atop the Rock, seeing its value as a watchtower for his new city. The fortification at Conak's Rock now serves as the southernmost defenses protecting the Kurnlands - the verdant belt surrounding the city of Kurn itself.



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Travelers arriving from the south encounter a one hundred-foot tall face of sheer rock looming over the road, with archers and ballistae manning the walls that line the edge of the promontory. The view for travelers from Kurn is more prosaic: the approach to the rock seems to gently rise up as the land slopes down around it towards the Trembling Plains proper.

### **The Banding Slopes**

North of Conak's Rock, the ground inclines upwards and becomes considerably greener and more fertile. Here, the southern reaches of Kurn's domain, the Banding Slopes, rise gently from the Trembling Plains to meet the foothills of the White Mountains. The majority of Kurn's noble estates are located here. The estates are divided in long, narrow, irregularly shaped strips radiating out from Kurn toward its borders, and, when possible, the estates are divided so that the land declines steadily as one moves away from Kurn. The estate borders are not marked with walls but with white-painted stones. Although the garrison at Conak's Rock prevents anyone from traveling between the Banding Slopes and the Trembling Plains without going through Kurn itself, the incline of the Banding Slopes makes its denizens, their homes, and fertile fields visible for miles.

### **Life in the Banding Slopes**

While slaves and day laborers tend the fields and carru herds of the Banding Slopes, chariot-driving nobles hunt and patrol their estates for Kurnan thieves as well as for any sign of foreign invaders. At least once a day, two nobles in chariots will take opposite sides of a long net, and ride swiftly down the fields, startling birds that have come to pick at seeds or devour unripe crops. The startled birds fly into the net, and when the chariots come to a stop, young noble children that have barely learned to walk rush up and club the birds into oblivion. After the moment of excitement passes, slaves prepare the birds for eating, and the noble children go back to gathering tortoise eggs with their grandmothers.

### **The Road to Kurn**

The Banding Slopes are off-limits to travelers; even Kurnans are required to stick to the main road rather than cutting from the scrub plains into Kurn's ascending verdant belt. The garrison at Conak's Rock enforces this law on strangers and native Kurnans alike, though they relax the restriction for the frequent

scheduled chariot races that run down the Banding Slopes and turn up through the main trade road to Kurn; patrols of Kurn's Black Brethren and Green Brothers are also exempt from the restriction. Even flying creatures such as aarakocra are expected to fly to the merchant district in Kurn first before landing anywhere else in Oronis' domain.

Conak's Rock is just one of the many strategies in place to ensure that everyone coming to Kurn to trade pays the entry tax. While the ground steadily inclines upwards north of Conak's Rock, the road to Kurn continues on a level plain so that, by the time travelers arrive at the gates of Kurn's merchant district, they find themselves 120 feet beneath the surrounding ground level. Hence, the walls of Kurn tower 180 feet over travelers, even though the walls are only 60 feet tall above the natural ground level.

Despite Kurn's steep entry tax, people flock to the city every year, eager to buy, sell, and seek safety, as Kurn offers a safe refuge from many of the deadly threats of the region. Additionally, Kurn offers high quality hide and leather armor at unmatched prices, and there are magical and alchemical items available in Kurn that one cannot buy anywhere else. Not even in Tyr is preserving magic practiced so openly.

### **The Brambleburn Wall**

This defensive wall is currently being built around the Kurnlands and will mark the boundary between the Banding Slopes and the Trembling Plains when fully completed. The wall's innermost layer is a set of wasp hives, while the middle layer is a 40-foot-wide stretch of brambleweed thicket. Despite the best efforts of the Gardeners' Clave, this thicket will take many years to grow to a height suitable to protect the Banding Slopes. Begun in the southwestern corner of the Banding Slopes, this thicket currently only rises 25 feet high in the southwest (as of Free Year 13), and it gets progressively shorter as one moves northeast along the wall.

The outermost layer of the Brambleburn Wall is a long patch of burnflowers, lying on top of a layer of spider-moss, stretched across a series of 30-ft deep pits. The idea is that anyone who tries to use defiling to destroy the burnflowers or the brambleweed will cause the solid ground beneath them to be destroyed, dropping them into a pit.

Only a small portion of the wall is currently complete (as of Free Year 13). Pits take time to dig, spider moss takes time to grow and thicken, and burnflowers are

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difficult to cultivate. Brambleweed grows noxiously, but this also poses a problem to the builders: with few iron tools to trim it, keeping the brambleweed under control has proven very difficult. One aspect of the Brambleburn Wall has proved a resounding success, however: Kurn's Wasp Herder Clave has begun to sell fire-resistant paper and cloth produced by its brambleweed-gnawing wasps.

### **Stonegate Cascade**

The Stonegate is a knobby rock rising from the desert about a mile west of the main road. The outcropping rises about 40 feet at its highest point, within a small copse of zaal trees, murza bushes, thorny askas, and spinifex grasses.

These plants survive because a small stream issues from a cave in the stone, feeding clean clear water into a series of small pools around the rock. The cave is home to the oasis' guardian, a druid named Telhina (Female Human Druid 8). Telhina has lived at Stonegate Cascade for more than forty years, though she looks no older than when she left her village outside Draji in search of lands to protect. Telhina has an excellent relationship with the templars of Kurn, offering them rest and welcome when they pass by.

Due to the oasis's location, Eldaarish templars also visit Stonegate Cascade, but they do so furtively and much more rarely. They have left Telhina alone because she does not live alone – the druid shares her cave with Tzavjjja, her lover. Tzavjjja is a ruvoka of the glujiri type, an elemental creature of water who appears as a short, barrel-chested humanoid with bluish gray skin. Tzavjjja dislikes direct sunlight and rarely leaves the oasis, but within its bounds, he has terrible power. His abilities have contributed to Telhina's youthfulness and allowed her to expand the oasis over the years.

Stonegate Cascade derives its name from the waterfall one can hear standing at the mouth of the cave in the outcropping, and from the stream that issues from the mouth of the cave. Few travelers have actually laid eyes on the cave mouth, however, since Telhina permits travelers to take water only from the last of the small pools around the oasis, the one furthest removed from the rock at its center. The Kurnan templars who occasionally visit the area on patrol are the only travelers permitted within the oasis itself.

The plains east of Stonegate Cascade are uninhabited due to constant raids by Neshtap patrols. These Eldaarish templars scour the region, hunting animals

and humanoids alike, and enslaving the latter when they can. The Eldaarish patrols rarely challenge Kurnan patrols – usually if the two sight one another, each veers off to avoid a confrontation – and several disastrous repulses taught them to respect the guardians of Stonegate Cascade. But the Neshtap troops are under strict orders to capture anyone else they find in the area, and they execute these orders to the letter.

The Kurnan patrols moving through the area always destroy any unoccupied Eldaarish camps they discover, preventing the establishment of permanent Eldaarish bases in the area. Kurn does not claim the area itself, however, and Kurnan troops avoid attacking Eldaarish patrols lest it lead to war. The Kurnans are always careful to send strong patrols into this region, however, for a weak patrol could be attacked by the Neshtap.

### **Two Moon Cairn**

About ten miles southeast of Stonegate Cascade and five miles west of the trade road stands Two Moon Cairn. This hill, more than 200 feet high, lies in a broad expanse of rock-studded sand dunes and scrub cacti. This open area was the site of a savage two-day-long running battle between the Champion Tectuktitlay and the wemics of the north. The wemics were fleeing the Champion's army, but Tectuktitlay caught up to them here and forced them to fight. The wemics, exploiting their superior mobility on the open plain, fought the pursuing army to a standstill. Many among Tectuktitlay's army were killed by sudden wemic attacks on their unprotected flanks, and even larger numbers were maimed or otherwise injured. After two days, Tectuktitlay allowed the wemics escape to the west. As his army rested, the Champion ordered his fit soldiers to pile the dead in great heaps. Tectuktitlay used his own magic to cover the corpses with sand and stones, forming Two Moon Cairn. But when the Champion's spell was complete, the hill formed by the bulkier wemic corpses stood taller than the hill created by the human dead. To avoid the appearance of creating a greater monument to the enemy than to his own troops, Tectuktitlay merged the two hills into one, with the crest slightly toward the human side.

Several slave tribes periodically visit Two Moon Cairn and use it as a lookout. Two King's Ages ago, a gith tribe built a fort on the Cairn and attempted to tax trade on the main road, but Kurnan templars drove them off the hill. The remnants of their fort lie on the Cairn's northern slope. A slave band calling

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themselves the “Kreen Eaters” currently dwells near Two Moon Cairn. This band of humans, muls, half-elves, and half-giants roam across the desert south of the Cairn, using the Cairn as the northern marker of their territory (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Dry Rivers**

*“You have done well to make it this far. The remains of Windflood have still not dried, and the insects have been breeding. Come, we have medicine; let us trade...”*

- Tludiyy of the People Under the Stairs

Two great wadis run from the Snow Crowns down to the Sea of Silt. The desiccated remnants of two great Green Age rivers, the wadi lie dry most of the year, but during Windflood season, great torrents of water roar down the channels for a few days, briefly resurrecting the rivers’ old glories.

The northern wadi is a deep trench running due south from the mountains, passing near Stonegate Cascade before emptying into the dried-up swamp now known as Silt Splash. When the northern wadi floods, a wall of water surges down its course, carrying debris and unwary travelers with it.

The southern wadi runs southeast from the mountains, passing south of Stone Well and through the Kreen Eaters’ territory before emerging into the silt, largely defining the southern coast of the Togas Peninsula. Unlike its northern neighbor, this wadi is choked with sand, washed into it by the seasonal floods. The sand-filled wadi frequently overflows its banks in Windflood season, creating short-lived shallow pools before the sun inevitably evaporates them.

A pack of tari scavengers live in an ancient human village along the southern wadi, just east of where the modern trade road crosses the old riverbed, 38 miles north of Thorlo. The tari live below ground, tunneling through the sand to reach and scavenge the remains of what was once a client village of Thorlo along the Green Age river’s southern bank. They scabble tunnels through the packed sand on the landward side of the wrecked village, careful to avoid the hatori that sometimes pass up the old river. The tari call themselves the People Under the Stairs and live by stealing from traders on the road or scavenging from the detritus the traders leave behind in their camps. The tari also grow several varieties of fungus in their subterranean homes, subsisting on molds and mushrooms for food, and trading a limited quantity of

fungal medicines and balms with House Azeth agents. Their leader, Tludiyy (Male Tari Bard 5 / Dune Trader 3, N), acts as the tribe’s main interface with its human middlemen (see *FFN* for more details).

### **The Blue Pool of the Ancients**

25 miles southeast of Hogalay sits the Blue Pool of the Ancients. The Blue Pool is an oasis with a limpid pool 20 feet across, surrounded by a ring of zaal trees and hardy bushes, which in turn is surrounded by a thick band of agaves, yuccas, and cacti. The Kreen Eaters slave tribe struggles with the Hozí’chak thri-kreen pack for use of the Blue Pool, but both groups are careful to avoid the central area ringed by the zaal trees.

Their caution is well founded, for the Blue Pool is guarded by three pyreen. These pyreen permit kreen, Eloy, and travelers to visit the oasis and procure water from the small springs out among the cacti, but they fiercely resist any attempt to enter the ring of zaal trees or to reach the pool itself. The three pyreen are named Tretai, Faluay, and Woro-asbu, and they have protected this spring for more than twenty King’s Ages, considering the duty to be penance for the ruin wrought by their kinsman Rajaat.

Tretai is the most powerful of the three pyreen, and the one who originally decided on defending this oasis. He had lived in the northern region before the Cleansing Wars and witnessed the ruin and desolation that accompanied the ravages of Tectuktitlay, Egendo, and the other Champions. During the Wars, he used his powers to hide the oasis from the armies and, after the Wars ended, resolved to continue his guardianship.

The leader of the three pyreen, however, is Faluay, Tretai’s mate. Faluay met Tretai after the Cleansing Wars, when she found his hidden oasis and decided to stay with him. Favored by the Blue Pool’s spirit of the land, Faluay leads the pyreen. She communes regularly with the spirit, and her wisdom is impressive even to her peers.

Woro-asbu, the third of the Blue Pool’s guardians, is a pacifist. He joined the other two about a King’s Age after the Cleansing Wars, when he was looking for a place to hide. Woro-asbu was horrified by Rajaat’s actions in the Wars, and by the struggle against another pyreen named Wruhas that used forbidden means in his efforts to put an end Rajaat’s atrocities. For Woro-asbu, the guardianship of the Blue Pool helps to assuage the guilt he feels for failing to oppose Rajaat and for helping to suppress Wruhas.

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### **Bone Axe Camp**

South of the village of the People Under the Stairs, nearly buried by sand drifts between the boulders, lies the remains of a camp used by the Bone Axe division of Keltis' army on its march south from the Thunder Mountains during the Cleansing Wars. Little of the camp itself remains, but the area has been rediscovered by Kurnan templars since the establishment of Keltis' rule in Kurn.

Today the remains of the camp, carefully hidden among the sand drifts and a laager of boulders, are used as a waystation for Kurnan templars and spies traveling to and from the Tablelands to the south. Small quantities of food, water, and other items are magically preserved, then hidden in clefts in the boulders, away from prying eyes. The biggest of the boulders is large enough to hide bands of up to twenty people, though Kurnan agents never travel in such large groups.

### **Shimmertent Scream**

25 miles south of the tari village lies the hill known as Shimmertent Scream. This bare stony hill, though considered by the Sons of the Free as theirs, is on the edges of the Kreen Eaters' territory (to the northwest) and the Filthspits (to the southwest) as well, and members of all three cross the site from time to time. The place is only dangerous on certain nights, and all the northern peoples know when those nights are.

When Ral is a waxing half-moon and Guthay is waning, the locals avoid Shimmertent Scream. Once the crimson sun sets, a ghostly tent appears on the hill, its silvery sides whipping slowly in a nonexistent wind. Unearthly screams surround it, the anguished cries of a dwarven banshee who will savagely attack any living thing he finds within sight of his hill.

During the Cleansing Wars, the vanguard of Champion Egendo's army overtook a dwarven family on this hill. By the light of Ral and Guthay, the troops attacked the family - refugees fleeing the ruin of their cities in the Tablelands - and slaughtered the dwarves, leaving the grief-stricken patriarch until last so he could watch his family be tortured to death.

The clan patriarch, named Akrsras, rose as a dwarven banshee soon after, as delivering his family safely to Hoyalay was his focus. Now unable to distinguish between those who wronged him and others, he hates

all living creatures, but focuses attacks particularly on humans and persons in any sort of uniform. Fortunately, the banshee and his shimmering tent appear only on the 31<sup>st</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> days of the season, when the moons replicate conditions like those the night his family was murdered: both moons in the sky, Guthay full, and Ral half-full or mostly full.

### **The Filthspits' Camp**

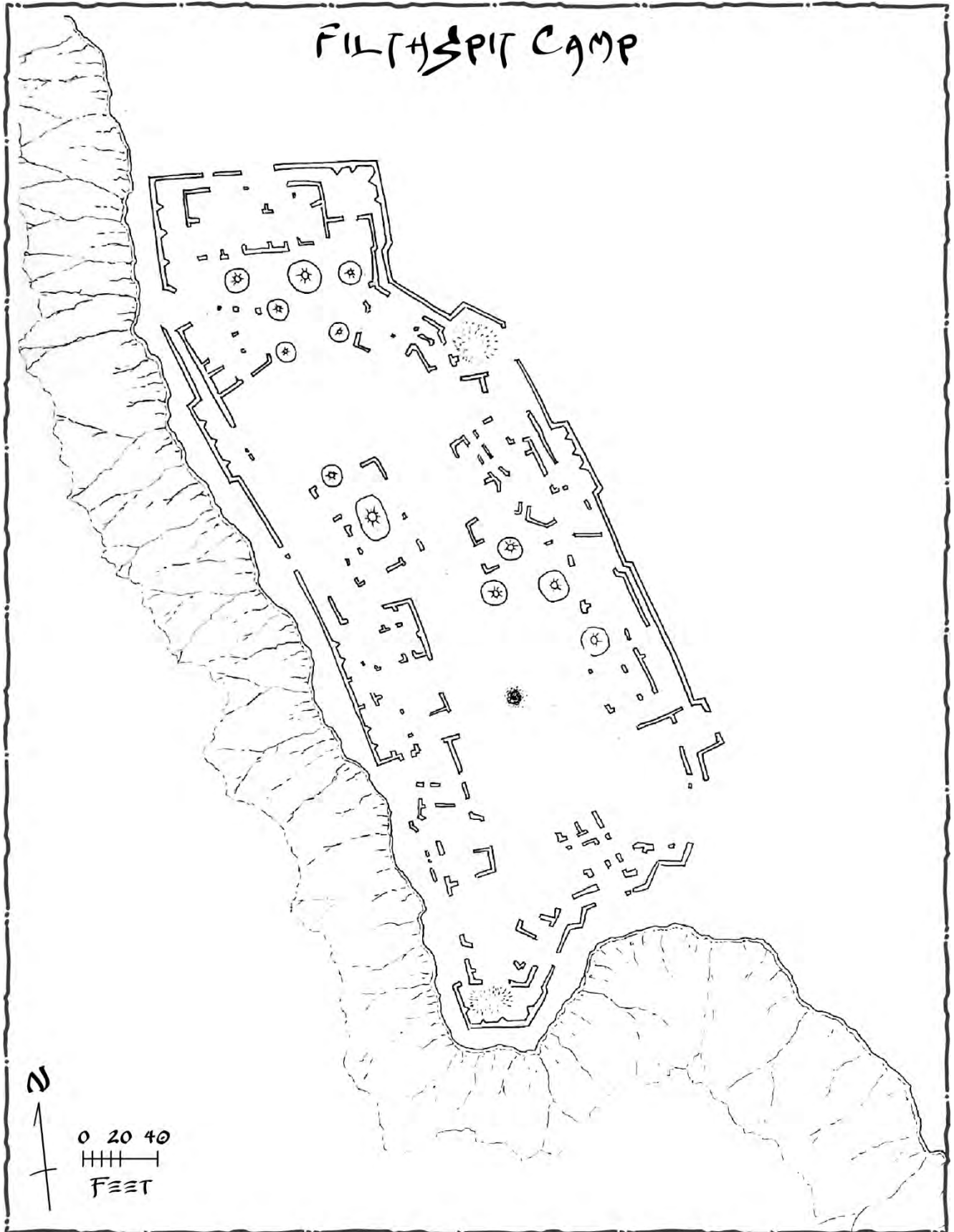
West of the hillock of Shimmertent Scream lives a tribe of gith who call themselves the Filthspits. They dwell in the remains of a camp Keltis built when he marched south from the Thunder Mountains during the Cleansing Wars. The tribe numbers about 45 gith divided into four feuding families. Turrjahk (Male Gith Fighter 6, NE), of the Talonripper family, currently leads the tribe. The Filthspits gith gain their name from their fungi-spitting attack developed by Turrjahk's father. Each of the four families live in a different quarter of the old army camp, pitching their filthy hide yurts among the sand-washed remains of the few stone buildings (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Ambush Point**

30 miles north from Azeth's Rest (detailed in Chapter Five: "Settlements of the Trembling Plains"), the trade road passes what would normally be the perfect ambush point: a tall nearby butte that houses caves and a nearly invisible ledge 50 feet above the ground, located just 60 feet east of the road. As many as a dozen medium-sized persons could stand on the ledge, firing missiles down on down at the road (with full cover from the road), and one of the shallow caves behind the ledge could hold as many as 20 medium-sized creatures.

House Azeth and other road travelers are aware of Ambush Point, of course. Azeth makes it a practice to send escorted preservers ahead of any caravan, hugging the cliffs to give them complete cover from the ledge. At this point a preserver casts *fireball* towards a pre-designated spot calculated to take in all of the ledge and the cave behind it. Azeth has done this for generations now, and there are probably few bandits remaining who are foolish enough to try to use Ambush Point to attack an Azeth caravan, but Azeth considers the practice good luck, and it improves morale on its caravans.

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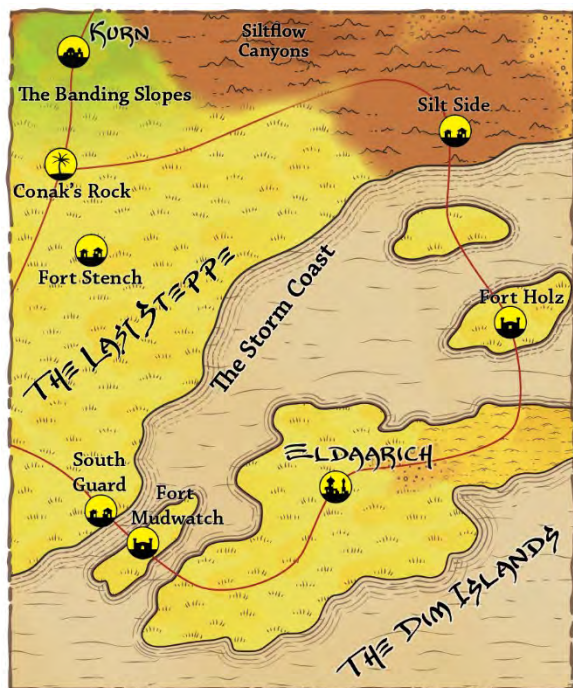




## The Storm Coast

"You've never heard of the Storm Coast, stranger? That's where the Dim Lands collide with the Trembling Plains. When the sky, creatures, and people of one land make war on those of another land, wise mortals stay out of their path."

- Lwaxine, an Eloy herder near Leavetaking



The Storm Coast extends from Silt Side and the Siltflow Canyons in the north, to Shevgar's Promontory in the south. The Coast plays host to violent annual clashes between both the weather systems of the Trembling Plains and the Dim Lands, and the two regions' inhabitants. For most of the year, the Storm Coast's weather is no different than that of the Trembling Plains, but the Windflood season brings lightning storms lasting up to a week that are so violent and constant that one cannot tell whether it is day or night. Some element in the dust in this region causes frequent lightning storms, particularly when there are irregular winds. These storms make it nearly impossible to hear anything but the loudest of noises, and only the deaf can manage to sleep without some kind of way to plug their ears.

There are no bamboo thickets over a year old in this area, because the lightning seems especially attracted to tall, narrow objects. When a lightning storm approaches, wise travelers lie down, or at least hold their spears and polearms horizontally rather than vertically. Tall creatures such as half-giants are

particularly in danger of being struck by lightning while standing up during a lightning storm. Lightning often sets fire to the scrublands, but the frequency of lightning and fires prevents the dry brush from building up. Additionally, in the Storm Coast, lightning *always* strikes the same place twice: any stationary spot struck by natural lightning on the Storm Coast is struck a second time, within 1 minute. The saying in the Storm Coast is: "If you get struck by lightning, and survive, then *move fast!*"

"Silt washes" line the eastern border of the Storm Coast, all along the coast of the Silt Sea. In a silt wash, the land on the coast is very low, and barely above the silt level of the sea. Wind often buries these low-lying areas in silt mounds up to six feet deep, and then blows them clean, leaving nothing more than hard-packed, sun-baked ground. In several areas along the coast, bamboo thickets spring 30-100 feet offshore from the Sea of Silt, but bamboo not cultivated by the slaves at South Guard becomes a target for the lightning storms during the Windflood season.

Dustgulls hunt here by day, and nest among patches of skyvine several miles offshore by night. The dustgulls especially prowl the area around South Guard, looking for crucified slaves.

### The Heartbeat Drum Posts

Anyone approaching South Guard will likely notice a continual throbbing sound that seems to come from the air itself. The throbbing is the sound of "heartbeat drums" played by hidden drummers. The drummers are agents of Savak, Eldaarich's secret police. Some of them have hidden watchtowers, and some use psionics to hover invisibly in the air.

### Togas Peninsula

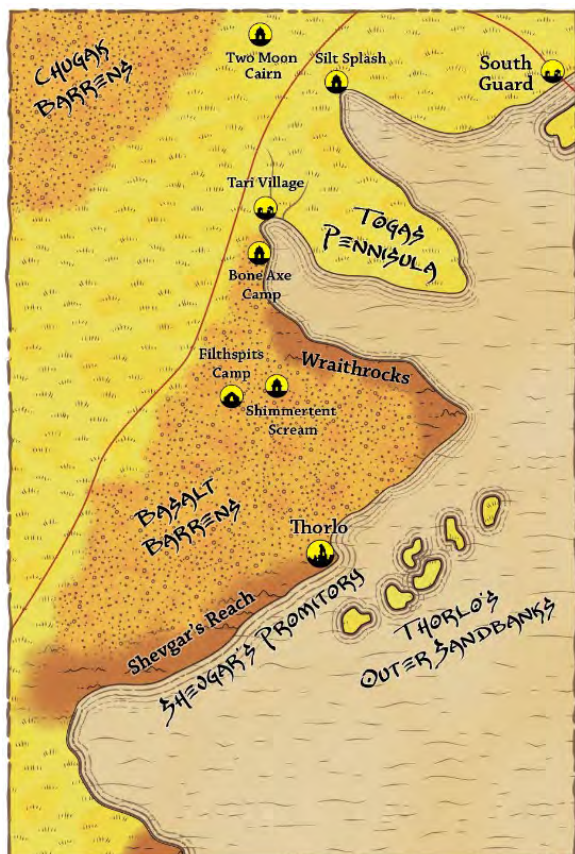
South of South Guard, two silt inlets carve out a peninsula of scrubland known as the Togas Peninsula. At the western root of Togas Peninsula, a series of humps rise from the plains east of the trade road. These are the warrens of three large antloid hives, located

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several miles apart. The antloids have lived in this region for King's Ages and most local traders know about them. On rare occasions, the antloids have savage battles underground for control of this or that fungus-pit or egg-warren, but generally the three hives are careful to forage in different directions to minimize competition.

Though the three antloid hives are generally indifferent to one another, the leaders of each recognize that they are foraging through the same areas; they also recognize the benefit of occasionally raiding humanoids for food. The hives include vast underground networks, with entrances as far as five to seven miles from the mounds. Many of these entrances are camouflaged and there are some secret connections dug by each hive into the others' warrens, for use if needed.

The antloids scavenge in the underground warrens and on the surface of the desert and plains. They will often attack small or poorly guarded caravans or groups of travelers, but the hives' dynamis have learned to avoid sending workers after larger caravans over the King's Ages. All the same, the caravans of House Azeth only stop within ten miles of the hives if they must, and then only on the west side of the road.



### Silt Splash

The inlet north of the Togas Peninsula used to be where one of the great rivers of the Green Age flowed into the sea. Farther inland, the riverbed becomes a wadi, actually running with water occasionally during Windflood season. But where it meets the Storm Coast, the riverbed appears as a mere swath of sand slightly lower in elevation than the surrounding wastes, with blown sand filling the bed except for a slender channel of silt.

About ten miles inland, an ellipsoid silt pan about nine miles across marks where a swamp once stood, near the river's mouth. The silt depression varies in depth from one to eighteen feet and connects by a narrow channel all the way to the Sea of Silt.

Silt spawn of various colors, silt serpents, and a few ruktoi inhabit Silt Splash. A silt paraelemental beast has also become trapped in the Splash, having grown too large to negotiate the channel back to the Silt Sea, and remains there as a threat to travelers. The main trade road runs within half a mile of the western edge of the Silt Splash, and travelers often stop along the road to collect silt mussels from the Splash's shallows.

### Shevgar's Promontory

South of the Togas Peninsula a little-known, barren, and uninhabited bit of ground named Shevgar's Promontory juts east into the Sea of Silt. A strip of badlands known as the Wraithrocks dominates the promontory's northern coast and hide Thorlo's ancient ruins. To the south, the Basalt Barrens separate the Wraithrocks from another set of badlands known as Shevgar's Reach, territory of a to'ksa tek known as the La'tik-tik ("Finders and Guardians"; a "tek" is a hunting pack of thri-kreen, a tribe-like organization ranging from a couple dozen to hundreds of thri-kreen. The "Thri-Kreen" entry in *Terrors of Athas* briefly discusses the tok'sa subrace, while *Thri-Kreen of Athas* contains more cultural details).

The Wraithrocks suffer considerable lightning strikes during Windflood season, but not to the same extent as the Storm Coast. Silt chokes the canyons, and most living creatures avoid the area. A number of undead creatures roam the Wraithrocks, either having escaped from or been drawn to Thorlo's emanations in the Gray (see Chapter 7: Dead Cities for a description of the ruined city of Thorlo).

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### The Sea of Silt

*"See the rags hanging from the rack near the main mast? Grab one and cover your face, boy! I won't be losing green crew because you haven't figured out how to contend with the Gray Death yet!"*

- Stavolo, captain of the silt skimmer  
Mulgrave

The Sea of Silt bounds the eastern edge of the Trembling Plains Region. All of the types of terrain and inhabitants of the Silt Sea described in the Wanderer's Journals can be found in these northern reaches of the Sea of Silt. There are, however, precious few vessels that ply the silt north of the Tablelands.

House M'ke maintains a regular silt skimmer route to Charvass, despite the chaotic situation in Raam. Eldaarich's Kulag fleet maintains absolute control of the sea north of the Road of Fire, and anyone attempting to sail a skimmer into the shoals patrolled by the Eldaarish had best be prepared for a short fight and a long tenure as a slave in the Kulag mines. There are rumors of silt traffic far to the north, but if true,

these silt farers seem to have no contact with either the Trembling Plains or Tyr Region.

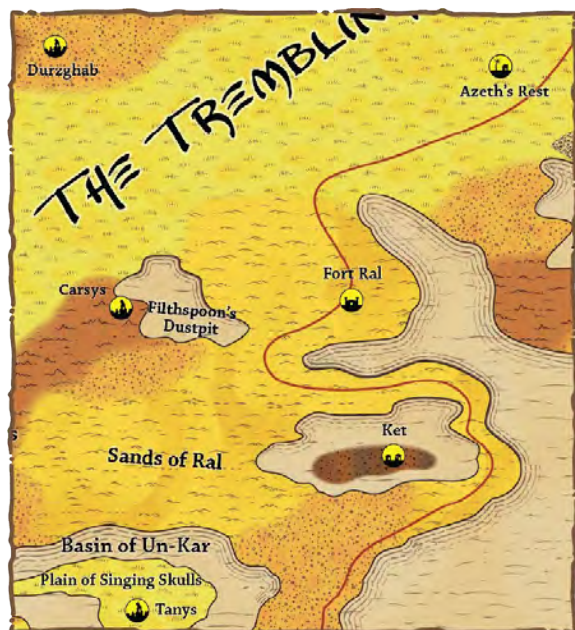
### Thorlo's Outer Sandbanks

Offshore of Thorlo's ruins, a stretch of narrow sandbars and islets awash with silt run along the shallows of the Silt Sea. A few families of impoverished squid-head giants live on these barren islands. The giants survive by harvesting silt mussels and silt spawn, and by hiding from Eldaarich's Kulag fleet.

### The Dim Lands

The bridges at Silt Side and South Guard lead to an island chain known as the Dim Islands, which are named for the Gray Death, the haze of airborne silt which usually blankets the area. The Dim Islands contain the city-state of Eldaarich and other areas of Daskinor's domain. The Dim Islands, along with Silt Side and South Guard, are collectively known as the Dim Lands (see Chapter Five: "Settlements of the Trembling Plains", for details on Fort Mudwatch and Camp Zero, which form part of the South Guard slave labor complex).

## The Trade Road South



The trade road that connects the Trembling Plains with the Tablelands is an ancient one, and due to its length,

its use has often been disrupted by bandit attacks. Politics has caused even more disruption to the use of the road: a major trade route until Draja severed relations with Kurn and Eldaarich 700 years ago (shortly before Daskinor cut off all outside contact with his city), the trade road has begun to regain its importance now that Draja has reopened trade with the north.

The importance of trade between Draja and its northern neighbors has only increased since the recent turmoil in the Tablelands. Now, as more and more caravans and traders attempt to make the lucrative journey between the Trembling Plains and the Tablelands, so too have more marauders, bandits, and predators become drawn to the potential prey on the road.

### Filthspoon's Dustpit

A deep silt sink around 50 miles west of Fort Ral, Filthspoon's Dustpit has no natural springs or mudflats like the Ket basin, making it of little interest to those in the village of Ket or at Fort Ral except as the

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occasional dumping ground. Where the Pit meets the Tembo Turrets in the southwest, the eroded remains of an ancient city lie either largely buried in the silt or collapsed in on themselves.

Several decades ago, before settling their current location, the Talonripper family united several other nearby gith families into a raiding clan under Turrjakh's grandfather "Filthspoon the Talonripper," who taught his people to survive by eating carrion and other things too vile for even other gith to consume. Judging himself to be a great and powerful leader, Filthspoon attempted to launch raids on Ket from the obscurity of the Dustpit, intent on stealing or extorting the village's grain. Filthspoon would prove to not be the cleverest of tacticians, however, and he was soon slain by the Draji garrison. The raiding clan broke up after this defeat, with only the Talonripper family and three others fleeing far to the north to lick their wounds and try their luck at finding easier prey.

### **Fort Ral**

Fort Ral lies a few miles south of the southeastern edge of the Trembling Plains. This remarkable fortified pyramid marks the northern boundary of Draja's dominion. Ironically, Tectuktitlay originally established Fort Ral to prevent trade between Draja and the northern cities, and now it has turned into a critical stop along the trade route. Fort Ral trades Ket grain to

obtain herders' animals for slaughter. Azeth caravans rarely stop at Fort Ral, preferring to push on to Ket to purchase grain, due to Fort Ral's prices being so high, as Ket supplies all of Ral's grain and much of its water. Fort Ral, the village of Ket, and the City-State of Draja - important trade partners to the peoples of the north - are detailed in the supplement *City-State of Draja*.

### **The Sands of Ral**

The desert around Fort Ral holds a curious site - the sands are a light green color, similar in hue to the smaller moon Ral. The entire area glows with a faint green light at night, nearly as brightly as Ral when full. The Moon Priests of Draja have declared the entire area sacred and forbid the Fort's soldiers from patrolling the sacred sands at night, and no soldier, on pain of death, will patrol beyond the gates after dark, but it has nothing to do with this decree.

The Sands of Ral predate all existing records of the region. The sands never seem to blow away or become covered by normal sand, regardless of the winds blowing across them. Magical and psionic investigations have detected no signs of magic, psionics, or other notable effects upon them. The garrison at Fort Ral warns travelers not to venture out into the sands after dark, and although many do and return safely, enough vanish to suggest this is more than just an unfounded superstition.

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## **The Charvass Peninsula**

Southeast of Azeth's Rest lies the little-known Charvass Peninsula, widely believed uninhabitable. The rumors are only somewhat exaggerated, but the Moratuc dwarves have nonetheless managed to scratch out a living here for 3,000 years and have recently begun to turn a tidy profit.

Two volcanoes on the Charvass Peninsula, Dwarf-Eater and Scourstone Sharp, remain active. A third local volcano is dormant - it has not erupted for over four thousand years and its enormous but shallow caldera has filled with a silt body known as the Brimstone Shallows.

### **The Painted Forest**

A curious formation known as the Painted Forest covers the northwestern side of the Charvass Peninsula, including most of Scourstone Sharp and the Brimstone Shallows. The ancient, petrified trees jut out from the shallow silt or from the twisted basalt, and strange creatures slither from branch to branch without ever touching dust or stone.

Temperatures in the Painted Forest usually range from 50° (extreme heat) to 180° (abysmal heat) since the land features boiling mud geysers and steam vents. Occasional severe winds may cool the land down to 130° (very hot).

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### Scourstone Sharp

The northern active volcano, named Scourstone Sharp, lies directly in the path of anyone that would travel by land from Azeth's Rest to the tip of the peninsula. The jagged and broken land constantly remakes itself with each new eruption, and Scourstone's caldera has moved several times over the last three thousand years.

### Dwarf-Eater

South of the Painted Forest, temperatures become more reasonable. The Moratuc dwarves have built clever stone chambers around the steam vents, both reducing the local hazard and providing a source of drinkable water. The Moratuc dwell in the

southeastern active volcano, named "Dwarf-Eater" by the beasthead giants from the Road of Fire, who alternately visit to raid or to trade.

House M'ke visits the Moratuc mines by silt skimmer. Other than Teima'a'ani's Eloy clan, House Azeth leaders, and an adventuring band that came through these parts a few years ago, no one else knows about the Moratuc's obsidian mines.

### Brimstone Shallows

A third large volcano exists on the peninsula and has sat dormant for millennia, and not even the Moratuc know that it exists. Its caldera is filled with silt, and this enormous shallow silt sink is known as the Brimstone Shallows. Most of the silt in this sink is actually powdered sulfur and ash from the nearby volcanoes.

## The White Mountains

The White Mountains are actually not composed of white rock, but instead get their name from the white tips of some of the peaks. Most Athasians have never even heard a word for snow, let alone seen it. Two mountain ranges visible from the Trembling Plains form the southern half of the White Mountains: the Snow Crowns, running from north to south, and

Rifak's Wall, running from east to west (A third mountain range, the Buranic Range, makes up part of the northern White Mountains). The two ranges collide in a particularly twisted area of mountains called the "Gloomwarrens."

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There are three tribes of aarakocra in the White Mountains, all related to one another and referring to themselves as the “Silvaarak”. The Silvaarak of Winter Nest (see Chapter Five: “Settlements of the Trembling Plains” for more details) are by far the most numerous and important, and it is from them that the other two villages of aarakocra, located at Storm Peak and Ice Perch, derive. The three groups are on good terms with one another, but differences regarding their religious affiliations and associations with Oronis of Kurn limit their interactions. The Ice Perch Silvaarak maintain seven waystations or “eyries” in Rifak’s Wall and another four in the northern and central Snow Crowns. The eyries take the form of large pyramidal or conical structures 20-30 feet in diameter and more than 40 feet high. They are built into recesses in the peaks and along sheer cliffs, and carefully camouflaged to appear as nothing more than rocky outcroppings that frequently occur throughout the mountains. Icicles, patches of snow, and ice sheeting complete the illusion. Some eyries are actually built with blocks of ice as well as stones, with ice serving the structures as mortar. The aarakocra eyries are completely inaccessible to any but flying creatures – because of their locations, not even the Kurnan mountain patrols are able to visit these places. As a courtesy to their people when traveling, the Silvaarak stockpile dried meat, firewood, and other necessities in the eyries.

### **Rifak’s Wall**

“Rifak’s Wall” refers to the arm of the White Mountains that runs east-west, separating the Oronha Valley from the Banding Slopes, and protecting the secret of New Kurn. The entire mountain range shares a similar geology - tall stark peaks split by a number of high-altitude plateaus and a small number of very high and difficult passes. Rifak’s Wall joins the Snow Crowns in a tumultuous jumble of sharp peaks separated by steep valleys known as the Gloomwarrens.

Swirling fog usually wreaths the peaks of Rifak’s Wall, which reach heights of 9,000 to 12,500 feet. Above 10,000 feet, the air is very thin and the ice is present year-round. Farther down the mountain, the ice appears and recedes with the seasons, posing problems for unacclimated travelers. There is little flora on the high peaks, though lichens grow on the exposed craggy rocks at even the highest elevations. In the warmer months, when the glaciers and snow retreat from the lower altitudes, flowers and grasses cover the ground. Small trees, mostly larches, frosty



saedras, and other hardy evergreens, sometimes grow as far up as this elevation, but the vegetation is much less thick on the southern side facing Kurn than on the side facing the Oronha Valley.

The rocky scrublands to the south and east make the mountains’ lower slopes on these sides barren - the territory of cacti, thorny bushes, and red boulders. This wasted area reaches as far up the slopes as the tree line, where a thin band of sparse evergreens grows on some of the peaks. There are caves in the barren rocks of the desert-facing slopes, especially in the narrow draw valleys at the lowest elevations.

Below the snow, ice, and fog, mountain spiders live among the rocks and in the highest fringe of trees, and several colonies of dark spiders dwell in the deeper caves in this region. Insects, small birds, and occasional colonies of bats nest in the shallower caves. The higher areas of Rifak’s Wall are home to some of the most dangerous creatures on Athas, including great tigoness, moonbeasts, drakes, and cloud rays.

Elite Kurnan units patrol the mountain peaks and passes. Mountain patrols in Rifak’s Wall operate from New Kurn itself, using cached supplies and small temporary camps to reach distant areas. There are numerous hidden caves, hideouts, and caches of furs, food, and firewood throughout the region. For example, up on the sloping arms of Tzrolach Mount, above the ruins of Nidukhazi, the Green Brothers maintain a small lodge hidden in a draw valley just above the timberline. The lodge sits beneath the stony soil; it is roofed over with heavy beams hidden by a thick layer of sod. Kurnan patrols usually stop here when patrolling down to Winter Nest, and the lodge’s supplies of firewood, food, and furs are always substantial. The sod over the roof, the vented chimney,

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and the small hidden entrance ensure that no strangers have ever chanced upon the lodge by accident. Nearly all of the mountain patrols are skilled mountaineers and have learned their survival skills from young Silvaarak, who find it amusing to try to teach these earthbound creatures how to survive in the snow. The Green Brothers work with the Silvaarak from Ice Perch, and with other extraordinary and supernatural creatures of the mountains such as rocs, aviarags, drakes, and cloud rays.

### **Dova's Peak**

*"See that pointy peak over there? Legend has it that this old aarakocra druid moved up there and lost his mind. Nobody is allowed anywhere near there anymore, not even other bird-folk. Druids, huh?"*

- Alvolo, tavern owner and inveterate gossip in Kurn

Dova, an aarakocra druid, chose this spectacular spike-shaped mass of rock and snow as his protected ground three King's Ages ago. The druid was led to the mountain during his coming-of-age rites and the spirit of the land here claimed him as its own. Over time, his true name has been lost, so that now he is known simply as "Dova" (an aarakocra word meaning "whisper").

Dova has no interest in what goes on beyond the feet of Dova's Peak; his sole concern is maintaining the mountain as pristinely as possible. He does not permit Kurnans to patrol his mountain, nor do they have any reason to, as the druid punishes any trespassers severely enough. The flying creatures of the White Mountains, as well as Rarunga the great tigone, are welcome at the ice cave where Dova often rests.

The mysterious aarakocra druid has no known contact with others of his species, though rumors of secret meetings between the druid and the senior Ice and Air clerics of Winter Nest circulate periodically. The weather on Dova's Peak is completely under his command, and many travelers foolish enough to seek to climb the mount have been driven back or killed by blizzards, high winds, and avalanches. Despite the passing of the years, Dova (Male Aarakocra Druid 6 / Grove Master 10, TN) remains devoted to his mountain, living on as if untouched by time.

### **Gusty Ridge**

West of Ice perch and east of Dova's Peak, high among the peaks and cliffs of Rifak's Wall, stands the ruined aarakocra village of Gusty Ridge. More than a hundred aarakocra lived here in the Green Age, but the population migrated to Winter Nest during the Cleansing Wars. Gusty Ridge has since gradually fallen into disrepair, but despite the years, many buildings of stone and ice still stand, covered in drifts of hardened snow.

Howling winds whip down from the north between several large mountains and crest over the ridge like waves, bringing sudden gusts and unexpected snowfalls. The aarakocra built all their homes on the northern side of the ridge, in the very teeth of the wind, to avoid the downrushing air currents on the southern side of the ridge.

Dozens of the small pyramidal dwellings favored by Gusty Ridge's inhabitants line the northern lip of the narrow ridge. The aarakocra built their homes with smooth outer surfaces to deflect the wind but included handholds and perches on the corners to assist them in landing during high winds. Few of the larger buildings of the settlement have survived the King's Ages of neglect, though one prominent structure does remain - Heaven's Eye.

### **Heaven's Eye**

The aarakocra of Gusty Ridge revered the massive sheet of ice which covers the cliff on the south side of the ridge, calling it Heaven's Eye. This ice flow remains frozen all year long, constantly refreshed by condensed and quick-frozen mist. High winds keep snow from accumulating on the Eye's perpendicular face, polishing away all irregularities until the Eye reflects sunlight like a mirror. On bright days, it shines with such brilliance that it can be identified as far south as Azeth's Rest.

Above Heaven's Eye, in Gusty Ridge itself, a 50-foot-tall structure — the largest in Gusty Ridge — still retains its pyramidal shape. This temple is colder inside than the outside air, colder, even, than the ancient snow crust blocking its entrance.

Within the temple's tetrahedral interior, a pink glow suffuses the chilled air. Before the last chief priest abandoned the temple and migrated to Winter Nest with his village, he performed the deconsecration ritual over the temple's central altar. In his hurry to vacate the sight, he erred, and the presence of

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elemental Ice has never left this site. Over the King's Ages, the essence of Ice has coalesced into an ice weird.

The thin pinkish glow of the ice weird of Gusty Ridge is an indication that the weird, despite its frozen surroundings, is far from healthy. The ice weird is an animalistic manifestation of the elemental Ice lords, the last gasp of the element which was once revered here. The ice weird understands that something is wrong, and that it has been abandoned. It has remained confined inside the temple since the Cleansing Wars and was not necessarily sane to begin with. It will attack any living thing that enters the temple and will fight until killed.

### The Gloomwarrens

The Gloomwarrens are a particularly twisted area of mountains where the Snow Crowns meet the mountains of Rifak's Wall. Within the Gloomwarrens, a jumble of sharp peaks rise up, only to be separated by steep valleys. Several tiny lakes lie at the bottom of the deepest of these valleys, so far down that sunlight never touches the water. Lying on the western side of the White Mountains, the Gloomwarrens are so separated from the Trembling Plains that they are virtually unknown and unexplored. Indeed, this region is so riven with cliffs and knife-like ridges that even the Green Brothers avoid it, patrolling only the edges.

The deep lakes of the Gloomwarrens are home to an entire ecosystem of sightless animals, from insects and fish to carnivorous predators. Lacking the ability to see, all of these creatures rely on psychic powers or a natural ability to sense vibrations to detect prey. Unknown to the world at large, the deepest of these

valleys contain caves that descend deep beneath the surface of Athas.

Oronis investigated these areas when laying the foundations of New Kurn, but even he withdrew when he discovered that the deepest cavern was host to powerful planar energies bleeding over into Athas from the Black. Encountering several powerful creatures native to the Black within the cavern, Oronis set wards around the area to warn him if any attempted to enter or exit. No creatures from the Black have left the cavern in the centuries since, but a number of aspiring shadow wizards have ventured in, drawn by strange, whispered promises; so far, none have returned.

### The Snow Crowns

Of the snowy peaks of the White Mountains, the most visible are in the southwestern arm of the mountains, running southwest from where they meet Rifak's Wall to a point just west of Hogalay. These are the Snow Crowns, where the Silvaarak of Winter Nest make their home. The inhabitants of the Snow Crowns include hairy snow tiones, savage ice feylaars, and a species of worm called a glutu. The Snow Crowns reach heights of 10,000-15,000 feet. Above 10,000 feet, the air is very thin and the ice remains year-round. Farther down the mountain, the ice appears and recedes with the seasons

Hundreds of ancient, ruined goblin holds, ranging from hermit hideouts and family-sized caves to fantastic subterranean and mountainside cities, dot the southern Snow Crowns. Daskinor killed every last goblin in the Snow Crowns during the Cleansing Wars (see Chapter Seven: "Dead Cities" for details on the ruined goblin cities of the Snow Crowns).



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The Eldaarish Red Guards maintain three hidden camps in the barrens and foothills east of the southern Snow Crowns, using them for secret raids and other incursions into these distant lands, such as when hunting aarakocra. They cache supplies in these camps, including dried meat, water, and hunting supplies such as nets and arrows.

House Azeth keeps a small outpost at the southern edge of the Snow Crowns (see Chapter Five: "Settlements of the Trembling Plains" for more details).

### **Drakebait Gorge**

East of the Gloomwarrens and northwest of Goblinfather's Hollow is Drakebait Gorge, a deep canyon wending northwest into the White Mountains. The canyon cuts more than half a mile into the mountains, turning slightly on its course. Sheer red-brown rock cliffs, from 400 feet to more than 1,500 feet high, bound it on either side and a bare-beaten path snakes down its center. Boulders lie like flotsam along both sides of the fissure, the detritus of eons of falling rocks pitching down from the beetling cliffs above.

Drakebait Gorge comes by its name honestly. More than half a dozen earth drakes live in the numerous caves which branch off the main canyon, each living in its own cavern. The drakes are all related, but they recognize a hierarchy in which the largest males are dominant. Otherwise, however, the drakes tend to ignore one another. Each hunts independently, and fights between any two occur only at rare intervals.

Though the drakes avoid one another, all of their caves open onto the same canyon. Drakebait Gorge sees at least one of its residents pass out onto the rocky barrens to hunt each day and there is usually at least one drake sunning itself at the mouth of its cavern as well. The canyon is more than 500 yards wide in places, so the drakes have space to maneuver around each other when necessary.

During the Green Age, Hogalay's dwarves came to the Gorge regularly. Worshipping the drakes as manifestations of elemental Earth, the dwarves often sacrificed gnomish captives taken in the wars with Udreegas. The drakes played their parts, devouring the screaming gnomes. On rare occasions, the drakes also snacked on the officiating dwarvish priests; Hogalay's clergy considered this an ill omen that required days of fasting and prayer throughout the dwarves' dominions.

An awesome sight lies at the base of Drakebait Gorge's 1500-foot cliffs: a mountain of drake bones more than 500 feet high. The drakes stand watch over the bones and will mercilessly hunt down anyone who disturbs the mound.

A tribe of human hunter-gatherers named "The Sons of the Drake" live along the southern face of Rifak's Wall, east of Drakebait Gorge, and they revere the earth drakes. The Sons of the Drake are descendants of the human farmers of the Kreegill Mountains, who fled north to escape troll attacks during the Cleansing Wars.

Despite their reverence for the earth drakes, the Sons of the Drake are not currently led by their Earth shamans. Dunik, a great hunter and the tribe's current leader (Male Human Ranger 5, CG) was acclaimed the tribe's chief after he led a heroic hunt up into the Wall during a harsh winter four years ago, bringing down game when no other hunters could locate any prey and thus ensuring the tribe's survival. Dunik's acclamation removed the Earth clerics from leadership, restricting them to solely religious roles.

The tribe's clerics have taken their reduced status with ill humor, and they continue to intrigue quietly against Dunik and the other successful hunters. There are several dozen Earth shamans, including pupils, among the 400 members of the Sons of the Drake. The tribe lives in six small villages, scattered across the foothills of Rifak's Wall, where the people live in crude hovels built of stones piled around shallow caves scooped laboriously from the hills.

The Sons of the Drake take pains to avoid the Chu'gak kreen to their south, remaining in the hills and mountains where the kreen cannot climb. On rare occasions, when the auguries are auspicious and the shamans approve, the hunters make a foray onto the plains to the south, but such hunts are always directed at particular creatures and never last more than ten days.

Kurn's Black Brethren and their aarakocra allies from Ice Perch are mindful of the Sons of the Drake. Although accomplished mountaineers, the Sons of the Drake lack the skill to reach the summits of Rifak's Wall's peaks. Nonetheless, the templars and the Silvaarak monitor the Sons carefully, and take especial care to avoid being seen when operating in the Sons' territory.

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### **Goblinfather's Hollow**

West of Fiendmoat Deeps, a lifeless stone valley sits nestled between the mountains of Rifak's Wall and the Snow Crown Mountains. Once rich with life, this valley was the scene of a seven-year siege against the goblin hold of Nidukhazi thousands of years ago during the Cleansing Wars. As Daskinor's mountain men slowly built a great earthen ramp to the gates of Nidukhazi, his defilers destroyed every bit of plant life in the valley to fuel their magical defenses as attacks rained down on them from the cliff-side and from the surrounding mountains. Nidukhazi was the first time Daskinor's forces faced deadly opposition from outside a city and, for a time, the besiegers themselves felt besieged.

Today, the Hollow stands as mute testament to the devastation of the Cleansing Wars. Although a few hardy trees and shrubs have grown on the upper valley walls, the lower elevations and valley floor remain lifeless. Wind eroded chunks of broken masonry lie next to boulders that have tumbled from the mountains above, and occasionally the winds shift to reveal a buried skeleton, or - rarely - a metal arrowhead (see Chapter Seven: "Dead Cities" for details on the ruins of Nidukhazi, and its fate).

### **Hogalay's Mines**

South along the foothills of the Snow Crowns lie a series of dark windows, peering like sightless eyes from the brows of the foothills. These are the mines of ancient Hogalay, the dwarven city to the south. In their heyday, these mines produced a wealth of fine stone - granite, marble, and porphyry - and limited metals. The mines were connected to Hogalay's western plaza by a miles-long underground thoroughfare, but when Hogalay was destroyed during the Cleansing Wars, the mines fell into disuse and were seemingly abandoned.

Some dwarves fled during the siege of Hogalay, however, using the belowground passages to avoid the armies of the first Dwarf-Butcher, the Champion Egendo. These dwarves, including many of the women and children, hid in the caves while the siege dragged on. When the siege ended in the cataclysmic ruin of the city, they remained in the caves for generations.

The dwarves had little choice but to remain, for the devastation of Hogalay collapsed the entrances to the mines, leaving the dwarves trapped. Fearing the return of Rajaat's Champions, they did not attempt to dig themselves out. Over the ensuing King's Ages, these

survivors turned first to cannibalism and gradually to worse things, becoming corrupted and changed by the foul power leaching from Egendo's imprisoned form.

Today the mines are inhabited by gibbering caveghouls, the corrupted dwarves' descendants. These twisted creatures are nearly hairless, with patches of stony scales appearing on disparate parts of their bodies. They are 3-4 feet tall and broad in the shoulders but with emaciated albino bodies. Their elbows and knees are heavily knobbed, and their hands and feet have become heavy claws. When glimpsed, the gibbering caveghouls' hideous faces often remind seasoned adventurers of hej-kin. The gibbering caveghouls cannot speak, except to gurgle, gibber, and chitter, punctuating their cries with wailing howls that echo down the mines. Whether the caveghouls are the descendants of matings between hej-kin and the last dwarves is unknown.

Unremittingly hostile to all humanoids that enter their mines, the caveghouls nurse a particular hatred of humans, whom they appear to blame for their fate, and of dwarves, the sight of which they cannot bear. Gibbering caveghouls cannot handle the light of day, and they are easily blinded by sudden bright lights, but they have uncanny abilities well-suited to the subterranean world in which they dwell. They seem to be able to sense movement in total darkness and have no difficulty moving or fighting in complete darkness. They can remain motionless for hours and have the ability to make their skin look and feel stonelike to the touch if they are themselves in contact with rock.

Despite their emaciated and skeletal appearances, the caveghouls are living beings. They hunt vermin such as lizards and bats, and live in small anonymous bands that once might have been family units. The gibbering caveghouls have little intelligence, though they are cunning hunters, and individuals lack names or lasting social bonds. Their language is a series of grunts and chitters, unintelligible to any but themselves and capable of conveying only the simplest concepts. Among the hundreds of caveghouls in the mines, however, there are some with potent psionic powers. These are no more intelligent than other caveghouls, but they have instinctive control over the Way that even potent mindbenders would envy.

Within the darkness-shrouded mines lie many treasures to entice the unwary. Many metal dwarven household implements remain in the mines, lying where they were abandoned when their owners ceased having need for them. Some weapons lie there as well, lost among the stones in the mine passages and

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chambers. Some dwarven families took their heirlooms with them as well when they fled to the mines, so there are also small quantities of gold and gems - typically jewelry - to be found scattered throughout the mines.

By far the most significant item the dwarven refugees brought to the mines was the *Vermilion Talisman*. This object, a great holy relic of the Earth faith in Hogaal, was sent from the city for safekeeping by order of the Earth King. The Talisman is a stone, or concatenation of stones, shaped like a beehive. It is just over 4 feet high and more than 2 feet in diameter at its base. It gets its name from the range of brilliant orange, red-orange, and orange-yellow colors which spread over it.

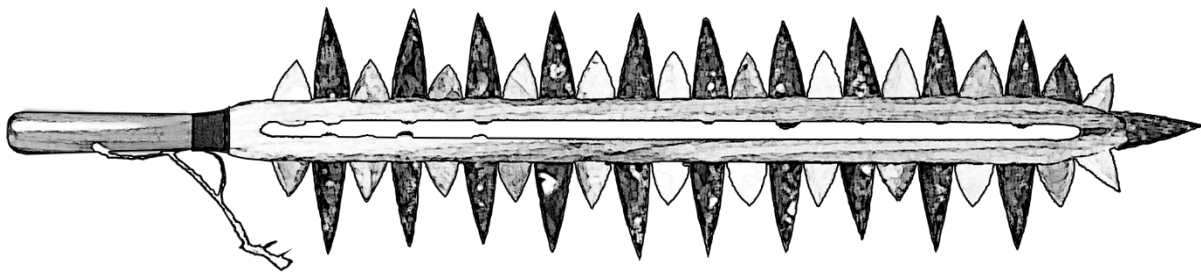
The gibbering caveghouls revere the *Vermilion Talisman*, worshiping the Earth lords in a primitive parody of their forefathers' beliefs. The Talisman in fact grants them a variety of powers, including *stone shape* and *passwall*, as well as boosting their psionic resistances to mental attack. The caveghouls keep the *Vermilion Talisman* in the deepest section of the mines, in a large natural cave at the very base of the White Mountains. Here they gather to worship the Talisman, chanting and stomping in great conclaves.

The full range of powers the *Vermilion Talisman* holds are not known - certainly the degenerate gibbering

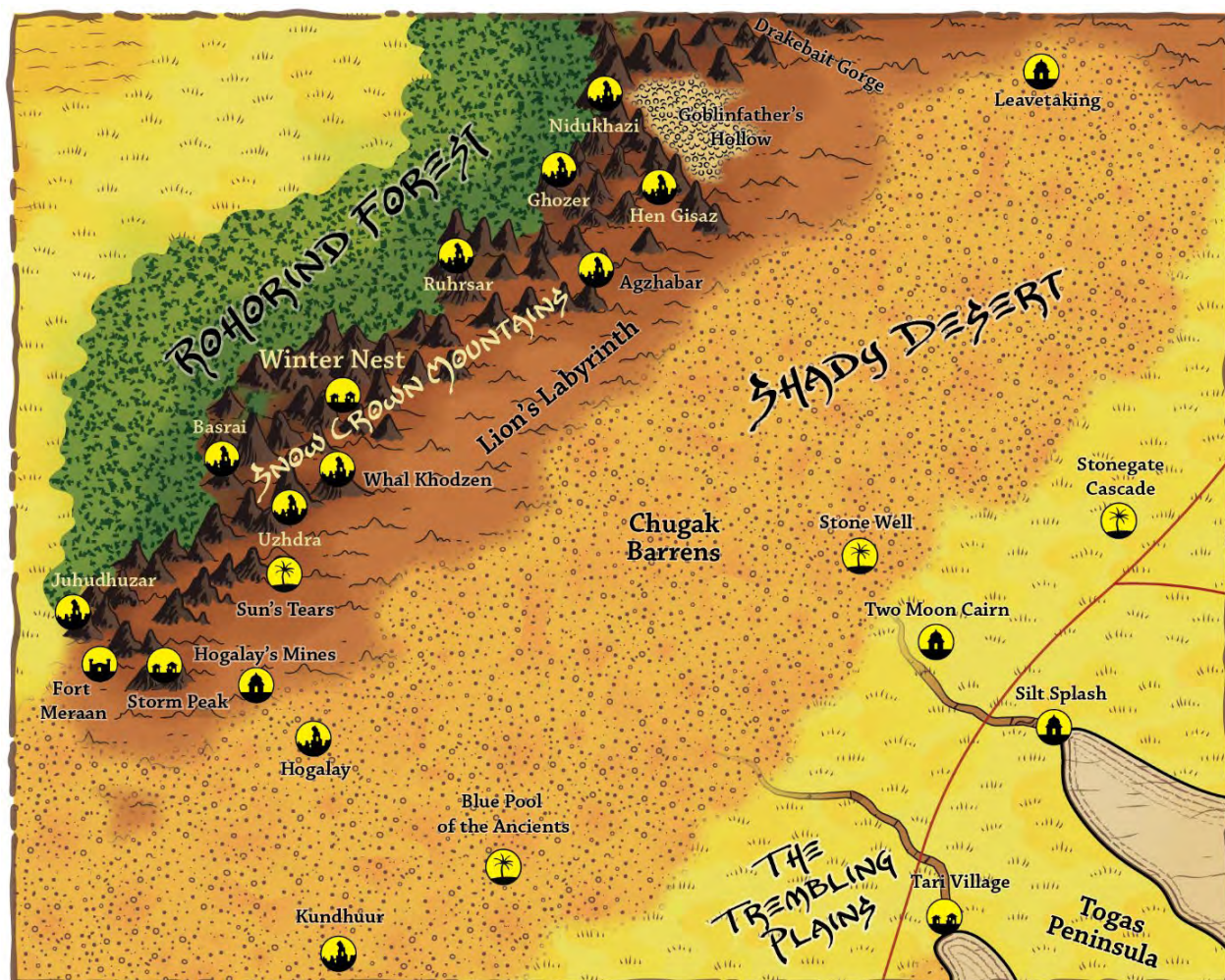
caveghouls have long since lost any comprehension of the artifact's capabilities. It is known that the Talisman confers enormous strength upon any Earth priests who focus on it as an object of veneration, increasing the potency of their spells, and granting them the ability to shape stone and command creatures of elemental Earth. Ancient dwarven texts preserved in Kurn's Great Library suggest that the artifact may have the power to "banish air", creating pockets of vacuum around itself, and that it may be hollow. What treasures or relics might lie within the *Vermilion Talisman* are not known.

### **Sun's Tears**

There is a spring, known as Sun's Tears, on the slopes of Mount Wolsstris just south of the Uzhdra ruins in the southern Snow Crowns. The name Sun's Tears was given to the spring by Kurn's Black Brethren, who use the spring and its cave as a rest camp when they patrol this area. The spring is hidden in an east-facing cave in the foothills, and it derives its name from the fact that the sunlight reaches into the cave to illuminate the spring on certain days of the year. The Black Brethren cache food and other essential supplies in the cave, and the location is a carefully kept secret.



## The Shady Desert



Locals collectively refer to the stony barrens and badlands south and east of the White Mountains as “the Shady Desert.” This is because, for the later part of the day, these lands sit in the shadow of the White Mountains, making the temperature more tolerable.

### Siltflow Canyons

East of Kurn and northwest of the Storm Coast, silt flows or blows into the canyons from the east, meeting water that flows in from the White Mountains during Fruitbirth and Flamesky seasons. Scattered vines thrive here, managing to reach above the canyon walls, but the silt tends to choke out other plants. While winds usually clear the air above, the canyons themselves tend to remain almost opaque with airborne silt, except immediately after a rainfall.

Over the King’s Ages, Kurn has fought a number of pitched battles with Eldaarish forces within these canyons. Kurnan templars loathe the security risk posed by having these blind canyons running right up against Kurn itself, and have walled off the eastern canyons from the winding road between Kurn and Fort Protector. Consequently, the Mirage Maker elves, ssurran merchants, and other travelers from the north tend to take the road from Fort Protector in order to reach Kurn. Kurnan spies also man listening posts atop the buttes of the Siltflow Canyons.

### Fiendmoat Deeps

South of Rifak’s Wall, and spanning from Goblinfather’s Hollow in the west to the edge of Kurn’s Banding Slopes in the east is a region known as the Fiendmoat Deeps, where the ground is broken up by a

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number of canyons ranging from ten to sixty feet wide. Running almost parallel to the Banding Slopes, the surface of the Fiendmoat Deeps slopes up fairly steadily as it goes northward, broken up only by the canyons until the land slopes into the foothills of Rifak's Wall. On the eastward side, a few Kurnan nobles have bridged the canyons and built holdouts, and the Gardener's Clave has created a grove atop another bridged mesa.

Some canyons of Fiendmoat Deeps tend to collect standing water, particularly during the Fruitbirth and Flamesky seasons. Standing water not only smells very bad but attracts loathsome stinging insects. To eliminate the menace and disease hazard, Kurnans have walled up the canyons within a few miles of the Banding Slopes, creating isolated moats around their settled mesas, and have planted cistern fiends to clean the water. Since no two cistern fiends can share a territory, and since the moats create some territories containing hundreds of millions of gallons of mineral and insect-rich water, the cistern fiends in this area often grow to colossal size.

While some canyons and areas remain dry or wet year-round, most of the canyons have at least a foot of water in them during Fruitbirth and Flamesky seasons, due to ice melt in the mountains above. Creatures that specifically prefer wet or dry areas tend to move to canyons that suit their needs when the seasons change the landscape from dry to wet and back.

### **The Chugak Barrens**

East of the Lion's Labyrinth and the Snow Crowns, a large bare rocky area stretches from Leavetaking and the Banding Slopes in the north, all the way to the Glowing Desert in the southwest. The Chugak kreen pack claims this impossibly large area as their territory. Ptterrax often glide down from the Snow Crowns, seeking prey on Barrens' exposed scabland. From time to time, a ghostly leonine figure rushes from the Lion's Labyrinth to the east; each of these creatures, known as pridemanes, was the last survivor of its pack, and it continues to search for its lost kin. A dhaot desires to return home, but the wemics were hunter-gatherers and herders who, like the Eloy, had no home except for the company of their people. The pridemanes will generally not attack unless provoked, or unless one of the travelers has the features or clothing of the Draji, the descendants of Tectuktitlay's Cleansing War armies.

### **Kundhuur**

A clutch from the Hozichak kek (see FFN for more details) has discovered, in the west of the kek's territory, a long-abandoned goblin camp, where goblins fleeing north from the Ringing Mountains camped en route to the cities of the southern Snow Crown Mountains. Like most of the other goblin camps in the southern desert, Kundhuur (the goblin name for this site) is little more than a scattered series of low walls of crumbling stone, with the rare household implement or goblin bone buried in the sand. It stands 25 miles due south of Hogalay.

Yet despite the apparently completely ruined and benign appearance of Kundhuur, the Hozichak avoid the remains religiously. The kreen sense a malignancy on the site, a malignancy born of the goblins' internecine squabbling in the time of the Cleansing Wars. A goblin band fleeing north sheltered in the camp less than a generation before Daskinor arrived in the region. There were twice as many goblins in this band as in most, and many had to camp in hide tents outside the humble stone walls.

Most goblin refugees passed through Kundhuur after only a few days, long enough to resupply with water from the small well at the site before making the final push to the goblin cities of the Snow Crowns. But this band remained at Kundhuur for several weeks, for they had many non-combatants and wounded who needed to recover from the journey north. While they waited, a savage sandstorm blew in and settled in the area.

The goblins were trapped at Kundhuur for another week, unable to move due to the lashing sandstorm. The size of the band had already overtaxed the site's meager well – the additional demands the goblins made by remaining an extra week, and consuming additional water during the sandstorm, proved too much; the well ran dry. For two days the goblins struggled to survive with no water, rationing as well as they could, but individual clans and families were hoarding what little they had left, and everyone knew it.

The first murders were hidden by the dark of night and the howl of lashing sandy winds. But rumors spread, and soon everyone knew that the only way to survive was to plunder water from the others. The next night Kundhuur was the scene of a score or more grisly massacres as the old, the weak, and the vulnerable were murdered and pillaged by their stronger peers. When the sandstorm ended two days later, fully half

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the goblins were dead. The survivors broke up into several smaller bands and scattered, each making their own way west.

Kundhuur was partially buried by the sandstorms, and the well was filled in. The corpses of the dead became a feast for scavengers, but many of their spirits remained despite the searing heat and the desolation. More than a dozen different dhaots haunt the ruins of Kundhuur, appearing whenever intelligent beings shelter in the ruins. The goblin dhaots do not consider kreen intelligent, but the Hozí'chak mindbenders can sense the evil brooding at the site and scrupulously avoid it.

### **Leavetaking**

A massive outcropping known as Leavetaking protrudes from the Chugak Barrens, visible from Kurn. Three thousand years ago, the butte marked one of the camps where dwarves fleeing the wreck of Hoyalay during the Cleansing Wars stopped to rest before continuing north. At this spot, Hoyalay's Earth King left his people, departing for parts unknown.

The survivors marched on to the destination their king had prescribed for them, most of them eventually settling in Kurkika in the Granite Spears. Dwarves who

forsook the march and took refuge with local elves perished when Albeorn sacked Kurn.

In recent King's Ages, dwarven survivors have begun to trickle back to these lands. Some carefully obtained Kurnan citizenship, forming the Kipherd Clave. Their commitment to Kurn is questionable; they visit Kurn only to trade, to vote, and to take refuge from the kreen during Flamesky. Other dwarves, those that could not abide taking citizenship in a human nation, went southwest and formed the bandit village of Kel's Lot. They still keep in contact with their brethren in Kurn, meeting them secretly at Leavetaking.

Stories of Leavetaking and of the old dwarven settlements in this area have begun to circulate in Kurn, and Kurnans know the butte by its dwarven name. Nomads who pass by the area say that the Mourning of the Earth Lords appears around the butte on certain nights. The Mourning manifests as a swirl of ochre-tinged winds, accompanied by a haunting song from unseen voices. Lights of red and brown dance within the stone from its foot to its 200 feet high peak. Kurnan templars have observed the phenomenon as well, but the White Disciples and scholars cannot explain it.

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### **Stone Well**

Sixty miles west of South Guard, between the Chugak Barrens and the Trembling Plains, lies a natural water catchment, a wide circular pit more than 50 feet across and almost 100 feet deep. Whenever it rains, water gathers in the hole, sometimes to a depth of more than 2 feet. The Nagukuz tareks use the water in Stone Well by lowering bone buckets, which they hide under stones when they are not in the area. How Stone Well was formed, or who made it, is unknown. But there are several cracks or slit fissures in the walls of the well, which may lead to passages in the stone below the rocky barrens. Nagukuz legend holds that these passages lead to the pits of the Earth lords, an area they wish to avoid as the tribe generally adheres to the faith of Water.

### **The Lions' Labyrinth**

The Lion's Labyrinth is an area of rocky badlands comprised of twisted canyons that lie between the Snow Crown Mountains to the west and the Chugak Barrens to the east. Long ago in these dark canyons, the Champion Tectuktitlay cornered and nearly obliterated the wemic clans of the northern lands. The wemics had retreated before Tectuktitlay's army for years, before being outmaneuvered and being driven back against the mountains. The Battle of Lions' Labyrinth was long and hard-fought. Tectuktitlay's troops charged into the twisting canyons and clashed

hand to claw with the wemic warriors. The canyons reverberated with the wemics' roars as spells and psionics shattered and melted the black stone. The Champion's army prevailed but the wemic warriors' gallant stand had bought enough time for many of the wemic lionesses and cubs to escape southwards.

In his haste to pursue the survivors, Tectuktitlay left the dead unburied. Many of the bones of the corpses remain where they fell, human and wemic tangled together among the boulders and crevasses. Bloodstains and wemic claw marks still disfigure the stones of the Lions' Labyrinth. Many canyons of the Lion's Labyrinth are choked with boulders or shaded by overhanging ledges, and the wemics used this area to effectively confuse enemy troops, leading them into ambushes and trapping them in blind alleys. Only after he committed his final reserves and then blasted down several canyon walls could Tectuktitlay overcome the wemic defenders. Many stones in the canyon appear melted into strange and unnatural shapes, evidence of the magic and psionics used in that battle long ago.

A dead waterfall, a final grim landmark, marks the area. Before the battle, a spring in the area poured water over a 40-foot-tall waterfall and down into one of the canyons. Defiling magic during the battle destroyed this spring, turning the water into an eerie smoky-colored glass and leaving the dead waterfall as a silent monument to the desolation left by the Cleansing Wars.

## **The Southern Rohorind Forest**

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West of the Snow Crown Mountains, a great forest covers the foothills with thick growth. This is the Rohorind Forest, a vast stretch of primordial ranike trees, fleearna, mo'onis, agafari, saedra, and other ancient trees. The Rohorind has stood largely untouched since the early Green Age, when the cultured halflings lumbered areas of the forest. The Rohorind was forgotten by the outside world as the halflings began their spiral into barbarism, gradually becoming a hunting ground for the feral halflings of the Time of Magic. Halfling tribes lived throughout the Rohorind until the conflicts in Orohna Valley forced many halflings to migrate through Thray-ee Pass into the northern Rohorind. These newcomers invaded the hunting grounds of their kin, enslaving many and driving others to the south. The southern Rohorind is today home to thousands of halflings, most of them

descendants of the original halfling inhabitants of the Rohorind Forest.

The southern Rohorind comprises two-thirds of the forest. It is oblong in shape, marching along the western edge of the Snow Crowns and joining the northern Rohorind in the northeast. The forest is more than 100 miles long and 20 to 25 miles wide. The trees include a mix of mo'onis, agafari, fleearna, saedra, and ranike, with a fringe of zaals along the Rohorind's desert edges to the west. There are fewer saedra trees in the southern Rohorind than in the north, but the southern forest boasts far larger and more numerous patches of bloodgrass than does the northern area. Rainfall occurs but is light; there are, however, numerous springs and short streams in the forest. Undergrowth is heavy in places, and many flowers grace the forest floor and the trees' lower branches, the

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## SOUTHERN ROHORIND FOREST

**Bloodclaw Nu'Glics**  
Chief: Reeheenak  
Tribe Size: 400

**Saedra Fishers**  
Chief: Irees  
Tribe Size: 200

**Dancers in Darkness**  
Chiefs: Untor, Kelo-tabsa, Ereb-tana, Abrasa  
Tribe Size: 450

**Cha'Gruhu**  
Chief: Amsiri  
Tribe Size: 150

**Sloth Slayers**  
Chief: Uz Ytri-asto  
Tribe Size: 300

**Cloud Leapers**  
Chief: Oric  
Tribe Size: 200

**Coso Keepers**  
Chief: Etriab  
Tribe Size: 300

0 Miles 5 10



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most spectacular of which is the naglassi. Naglassi flowers bloom in spring and early summer, their huge orange blooms attracting pulp bees from the desert and small mammals and insects from within the forest. Brain seed plants grow through the forest, preying on halflings and other animals alike.

The fauna of the Rohorind includes feylaars, klars, many varieties of spiders, and other creatures. Among the spiders native to the southern Rohorind is the fisher spider, a furry spider with a body about the size of a human hand, which lives in the canopies of saedra and other trees. The fisher spider hunts by extending a long strand of sticky webbing down into the air, catching unwary insects and birds. A small carnivorous rodent called a nu'glic is common in the northern areas of the southern Rohorind, where it preys on other small creatures, birds, reptiles, and mammals alike. Wrabs, such as those trained lizards that dwell in Tyr, live here in the wild.

A large but unknown creature lives in Timbergrave, a large thicket where the Green Age halflings lumbered a wide area and then abandoned the cut logs before they could be dragged away. Ever since, the area has been a thicket of briars, vines, and massive timbers – mysteriously, the cut timbers have never decayed, despite the passage of thousands of years. Nor do fresh seedlings sprout here, save those of thorns and clinging vines. Timbergrave is avoided by all the halfling tribes of the southern Rohorind, except by the nocturnal hunters of the Dancers in Darkness. The rough paths crushed through the thicket remain a

source of mystery and omnipresent dread to even these proud souls.

xxSeven tribes of feral halflings, with a total population of about 2,500, currently exist in the southern Rohorind Forest. These halflings have no knowledge of the Kurnans in Orohna Valley, but they remember well the genocidal invasion of their northern hunting grounds by halflings displaced from the Valley centuries ago. There remain differences in dialect and culture between the halflings of the northern and southern Rohorind to this day, and an undying hostility. The halflings often ambush members of other tribes, especially those they recognize as members of the four tribes of the northern Rohorind.

### **Feral Halfling Tribes of the Rohorind Forest**

The seven current tribes are: the Saedra Fishers, the Bloodclaw Nu'Glics, the Sloth Slayers, the Cloud Leapers, the Coso Keepers, the Cha'Gruhus, and the Dancers in Darkness. The Bloodclaw Nu'Glics dwell in the northeast of the southern forest, abutting the northern Rohorind. The Saedra Fisher tribe dwells further south, controlling a swath of forest that bulges far to the west. The Sloth Slayers live to the southeast, with most of their villages built in the hills of the White Mountains. The Cloud Leaper territory is a pocket to the east, a large vale in the arms of the Snow Crowns. Centrally located in the southern Rohorind lies the largest area, controlled by the Dancers in Darkness. Stretching across the western edge of the forest is the territory of the Cha'Gruhu tribe. The Coso Keepers live in the farthest south.



**The Bloodclaw Nu'Glics**, with 400 members, live in the most northerly portion of the southern Rohorind. The Bloodclaws are led by a hard-nosed warrior named Reeheenak (Male Halfling Fighter 7, CE) who, despite his cruelty, has a fierce loyalty to his tribe. Reeheenak dreams of reclaiming the northern Rohorind from the tribes which dispossessed his ancestors King's Ages ago, and always reserves his greatest brutalities for prisoners taken from the north. The tribe is named for the nu'glic, a small predatory rodent which lives on the forest floor and preys on small birds, lizards, and other mammals. The Bloodclaws' villages include Setheg, Vorti-aca, Mikso-muni, and Handu-tri.

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The **Saedra Fishers**, with 200 members, are named after the “fishing spiders” which dwell in the canopies of saedra trees in this region of the forest. The Fishers are led by Irees, an Earth priestess (Female Halfling Cleric 7 / Psion 4, LN) who fully realizes that her small tribe must be mindful of its stronger neighbors. The tribe discovered esperweed six generations ago and has since cultivated the plant to enhance their psionic abilities. Irees and the Saedra Fishers take their cue from the spiders which live in their trees – they set traps for their foes while remaining hidden. Even the Fishers’ villages of Futi-sagda and Absila are hidden, being dug underground among the tree roots and hillocks of the forest.

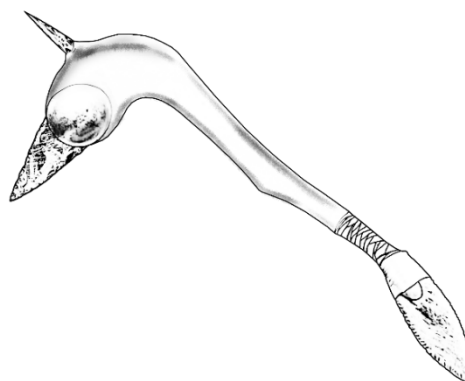


The 300 members of the **Sloth Slayers** are led by Uz Ytri-asto, a young halfling hunter who recently bested the tribe’s elder chief. Ytri-asto (Male Halfling Fighter 5, CN) is headstrong and bold, having made his name among the younger hunters during the tribe’s ritual

sloth hunts. Ytri-asto has a personal grudge against the Dancers in Darkness tribe, since his older brother was slain and eaten by them; his goal is to lead a great crusade against the Dancers, and he has already organized several large raids into their territories. The Sloth Slayers base their tribal identity on the ritual sloth hunts which all young males participate in. There are four Slayer villages: Hebadi, Seviatu, Deb-dakara, and Mokri-afsa. Seviatu is the largest, due to the unusual ghosts which defend it against raids by the Dancers.



The **Cloud Leapers** tribe’s 200 members live in the rocky hills of the western mountains. The Leaper leader is a principled old halfling elder named Oric (Male Halfling Rogue 8, LG). Oric has wisely kept his people strong by allying with other tribes when possible. The Cloud Leapers have prospered under Oric’s rule, but he is growing old and factions supporting different possible successors are developing within the tribe. The Leapers’ adulthood ritual, which each young hunter must perform before they can be accepted into the society of adults, is a leap off a crag into the trees 50 feet below. The trees are often obscured by drifting fog, as the ceremony is performed only at twilight four times a year. The Cloud Leaper villages of Reb-zutru, Ukruti, and



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Othanka are built on the rocky crags of the foothills, using the beetling cliffs to provide defense against the other tribes' raids.



The 450 members of the **Dancers in Darkness** tribe control the largest hunting grounds of any of the southern tribes. They are led not by a single leader but by a cabal of four halflings: Untor (Male Halfling Rogue 6, CE), Kelo-tabsa (Male Halfling Rogue 9, LE), Ereb-tana (Female Halfling Ranger 8, N), and Abrasa (Male Halfling Psion 7, NE). The cabal of leaders purports to organize the tribes' raids, but in fact their control is very loose. The Dancers are the most brutal of all the southern Rohorind's tribes. Their warriors and women alike sharpen their teeth with stones. The males often raid other tribes in search of food and

slaves, usually by night. In battle they both fight with weapons and bite, seeking to drink hot blood and thus reaffirm their status in the hierarchy. The tribe's females do not fight but do tend the bloodgrass planted as a defense and warning system around their villages. The six Dancer villages are: Erli-ato, Wahat-suo, Tudri, Mesekt, Abla-tivi, and Hezot-tabu.



The **Cha'Gruhu** tribe, with 150 members, formed fifty years ago when refugees from intertribal wars farther north fled south and established this village. The tribe is currently led by Amsiri, a powerful and very intelligent warrior (Male Halfling Fighter 9, NG) who has worked over the years of his rule to defend the tribe and build up its strength. He has brought the tribe's druids into the leadership with him, and together they have built up a thick brambleweed fence around their village and water holes. The village is named Cha'Gruhu, and the tribe draws its name from the place.

The **Coso Keepers'** 300 halflings live in the far south of the Rohorind. They are led by Etriab (Male Halfling Druid 8, N). Etriab has devoted himself and his people to the growth of the forest, actively expanding the forested area to the south and west. The growth is marginal, but the Rohorind has grown at the behest of the local spirits of the land. The focus of the tribe's nature faith is a deep watering hole they call the Coso. Often, the spirit of the land will manifest itself there as a water weird or similar creature, and once an entire raiding party of Dancers was destroyed by the spirit

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when they camped too close to the Coso. The Keepers' villages are Nuhu-tara, Elhelo, and Tradu-lia.



There were, within the memories of the shamans and griots of the seven currently existing tribes, once three other halfling tribes in the southern Rohorind Forest. These tribes perished for a variety of reasons, and in one case the undead remnants of the tribe continue to influence the surviving tribes' interaction.

### **Extinct Tribes**

One of these now extinct tribes was the Klar Brothers, a tribe which had a symbiotic totemic relationship with the klars that dwell throughout the forest. The tribe was extremely powerful, ruling an area which now belongs largely to the Dancers in Darkness. The tribe's power was based on their bond with the forest's klars, which enabled their shamans to summon the great bears to join them in battle and guard their frontiers. But the Klar Brothers grew proud and bold, and after one particularly successful raid the tribal chief ignored the shamans and refused to leave the klar's fifth of the fresh meat for the beasts. He argued that the klars had not come to aid the tribe in the raid, and so earned no meat – but this breaking of the totemic bond led to ever-greater abridgements of the bond, and in the end the tribe was destroyed by the forest's vengeful klars.

The second of the deceased tribes was the Blood Hunters. This band started the practices of sharpening teeth with stone and raiding stealthily by night; the Dancers tribe was initially simply a sub-klan of the Hunters. But the Dancers proved more adept than their

masters, and turned the techniques of secret attack and brutal conquest against the Hunters. The village of Seviatu, which is now populated by the Sloth Slayers, was once a hamlet of the Blood Hunters – since the night, several generations ago, when the Dancers slew the last Hunters there, the terrible ghosts of the perished Hunters have remained on the site, defending the village's successive inhabitants from Dancer raids.

The third and last of the extinct tribes was the Children of the Forest, a once powerful tribe that fell under the leadership of Urvibi the Peaceful. Urvibi was a wise druid who advocated pacifism and healing, but Urvibi understood little of the brutal realities of halfling politics and survival in the forest. The Children were annihilated by other, more aggressive tribes and some of their survivors became refugees who ultimately joined the Cha'Gruhu.

Of the halflings of the southern Rohorind Forest, only those of the Bloodclaw Nu'Glics participate in the northern tribes' worship of the spirit of the land called Uua'a'I'a that dwells in a deep, jagged gorge four miles west of Thray-ee Pass. The Bloodclaws periodically send ritual hunting bands north to offer sacrifices at the gorge – usually the northern halflings permit the religious procession to pass unmolested, since they also worship Uua'a'I'a, but recently the ritual bands have been attacked by halflings from one or more of the northern forest's tribes.

Another aspect of the halflings' religion involves ritual sacrifice of their own tribesmen to local spirits of the land. Often these ceremonies precede major raids on other halfling tribes in the forest, in an effort to propitiate the spirits and ensure victory, though the sacrifices also may be performed as part of rituals begging for rain. Victims are not eaten after sacrifice, but are often bound to trees and left to bleed to death from slow wounds, consumed by the creatures of the forest. Among the Cloud Leapers and Sloth Slayers, the sacrificial victims are frequently left in Timbergrave.

The Dancers are the only tribe which does not perform halfling sacrifices to the spirits. They kill their prisoners by drinking their blood in grisly ceremonies, and then feasting on the raw flesh of the dead. Captives are always subjected to hideous cruelties before the agonizing slow death of being bled to death into the cups and mouths of the hungry halflings – in many cases the Dancers train their children to drink blood by offering the young males the captives, letting the boys brutalize the victims nearly to death before the main ceremony begins.

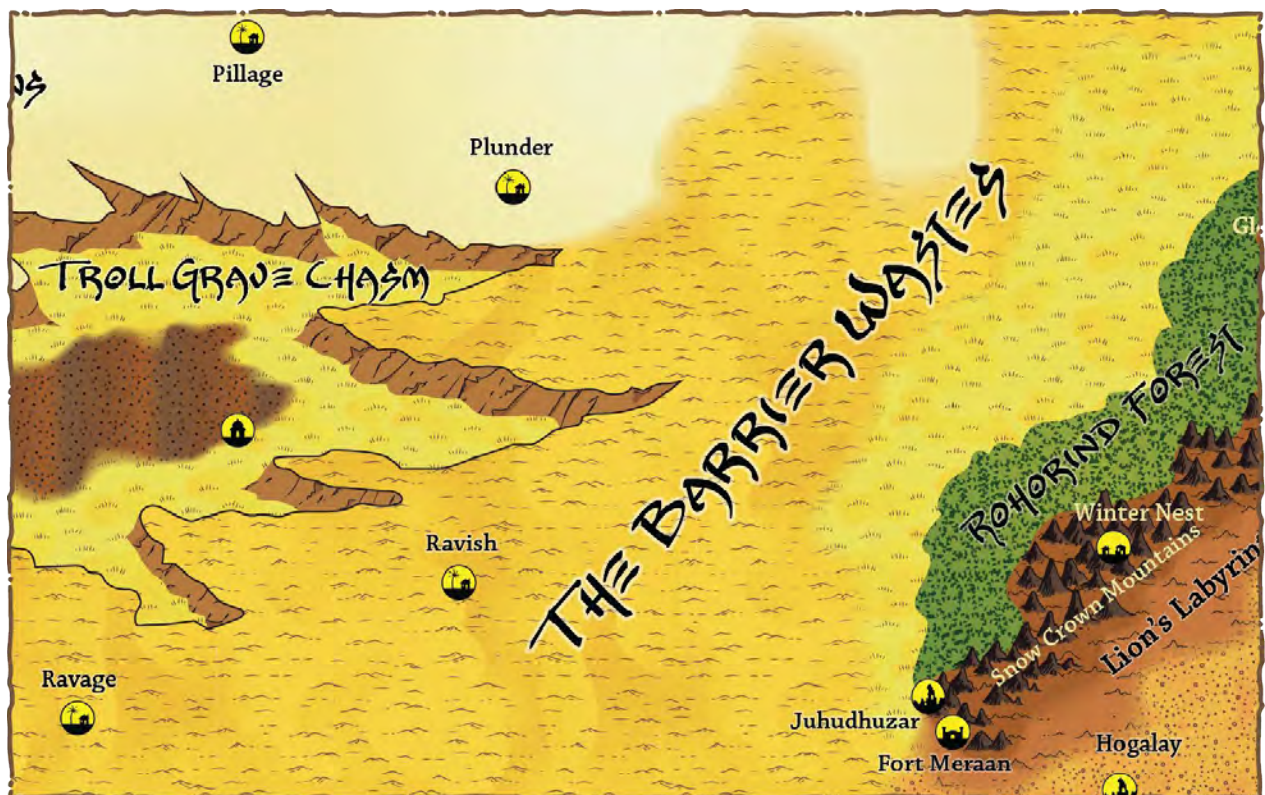
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In the northern portion of the Sloth Slayer territory is a deep pool of still water, apparently fed by an underground spring. Within this deep pool lives a water drake. Every few days the drake leaves the water for several hours, hunting in the areas around the pool. The Sloth Slayers regard it as a great feat of bravery to “hunt” the beast during its visits to dry land; the hunters stalk the great beast, trying to get as close as possible to the drake while remaining undetected. Only the most foolhardy among them dare to strike at the beast, and only as it is returning to the pool. The Sloth Slayers reward any of the tribe’s hunters who

survive such a feat with deep respect and the title “Uz” (meaning *bold*).

Kreen raiders occasionally enter the forest from the wastes to the west, particularly in the areas inhabited by the Saedra Fishers and the Cha’Gruhus. Both tribes keep stocks of ranike sap on hand to defeat kreen incursions. The kreen, as well as gith, elves, belgoi, and others who are tempted to raid into the southern Rohorind are all well aware of the halflings’ savagery and skill. Would-be raiders are careful not to penetrate too far beneath the eaves of the forest.

## The Barrier Wastes Area



The Barrier Wastes lie northwest of the Trembling Plains, the Chugak Barrens, and the Rohorind forest, and include the Scorpion Plains, the Glowing Desert, and the Troll Grave Chasm. The Glowing Desert gets its name from its cold, ghostly luminescence at night, bright as starlight. There is less life here than in normal sandy wastes (for purposes of defiling, treat the area as if it were salt flats); conversely, the salt flats of the Scorpion Plains are not as lifeless as the salt flats of the Tyr Region, instead containing numerous cracks in which plants and small animals, such as scorpions, can

be found. The forbidding area known as Troll Grave Chasm is, perhaps ironically, the greatest concentration of life in the Barrier Wastes. Lush oases water a verdant scrub plain at the bottom of the Chasm, and a mudflat of immense proportions lies at its center. The abundant vegetation of the Chasm supports a rich ecosystem whose fauna ranges from insects to reptiles, and even more dangerous creatures. Regardless of the terrain, food, water, and shelter become increasingly difficult to find as one approaches the Jagged Cliffs.

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### **Temperature in the Barrier Wastes**

Temperatures in the Barrier wastes range from 120° to 150° during late afternoon, but the severe wind gives some respite from the terrible still heat. From 8 AM through 11 AM, persons not in the shade must make Fortitude checks against the heat every hour. To escape the deadly heat, a character should either seek refuge in a cool cave or tunnel, or should find shade and gradually splash two days rations of water on his clothing to help cool off.

From 1 AM to 6 AM, the winds add to the chilling effect. Persons who lack thick clothing designed to protect them from the cold are at risk of exposure.

### **Winds of the Barrier Wastes**

In game terms, the Barrier Wastes' steady, maddening winds (see page 74 of the *Wanderer's Chronicle*) are severe winds. In addition to the ordinary effects of a severe wind, the winds may also blow away unsecured objects such as arrows from an open quiver or tear off loose clothing such as cloaks that are not secured with a belt. Additionally, the wind causes mekillots to become nervous and eventually panic.

The Barrier Wastes also suffer from frequent "Angry Winds" - bursts of 80 mph hurricane force winds that extinguish all flames, and render ranged attacks and hearing impossible. Nothing but the roaring of the wind can be heard. Medium-sized creatures are often blown away, while large creatures are typically knocked down. Kanks react badly to the Angry Winds and will fight anyone who is trying to keep them from escaping unless a handler takes pains to calm them down.

For the most part, bandits from the Wastes launch forays into the Trembling Plains area, attack each other's returning raiding parties, and attempt to overrun and plunder each others' villages while the village's strongest warriors are away on a raid. Other bandit targets (in order of frequency) include: the ssurran merchants from the Scorched Plateau, Kurn's client villages, the Rohorind halfling villages, distant villages and merchants of the Tablelands, the dwarven fortress of Foul Puddle to the northwest, the elves of the Sombre Woods, the feral halflings of Small Water, and — least frequently — the client villages of Thamasku. The Wanderer calls the Barrier Wastes part of the "Jagged Cliffs Region," perhaps because the Wastes abut the Thamasku area to the west, allowing for the possibility that the Bandit States could come in contact with the Rhul-Thaun, but such encounters are as rare as they are hostile, and have mostly been disastrous for the bandits. Still, more than one bandit chief possesses at least one life-shaped object, an intriguing reminder of Thamasku's un plundered wealth.

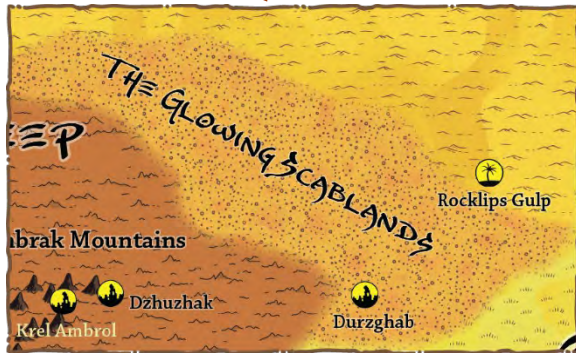
The Barrier Wastes' scorching daytime temperatures create a nearly constant and severe eastward wind that lasts from dawn until hours after dusk, when the scorching heat gives way to freezing cold. After an hour of still winds and comfortable temperatures, a strong freezing westward wind springs up, and lasts until sunrise; afterwards, there is again an hour of moderate temperatures and still winds, and then when

the sand has absorbed as much of the sun's heat as it can, temperatures return to scorching levels and the eastward wind picks back up.

The winds play in the bandits' favor, allowing them to cross otherwise inconceivable distances for their raids and getaways. The people of the Bandit States employ unique riding vehicles for crossing the wastes. Called sail carts, these small, wheeled vehicles are made of light materials like bone and animal carapaces and carry two human-sized passengers. Sails rise above the carts to capture the wind and propel the vehicles across the smooth terrain. The bandits usually bury their sand carts at the edge of the Wastes when raiding.

The *Wanderer's Chronicle* describes the tribes and leaders of the seven "Bandit States," and *Faces of the Forgotten North* provides statistics and additional information. In the year since the Wanderer's description, one significant change has occurred: a new Dragon has taken up residence in the Barrier Wastes. Kalak's former necromancer, Dote Mal Payne, has managed to complete the first stage of the dragon transformation as a means of prolonging his life. After a near-fatal confrontation with Hamanu (who knows about the necromancer's transformation), Payne left his previous hiding spot near Yaramuke and went into hiding. Using *advanced domination* to control their chieftain Densis, Dote has used the bandits of Spoil to sustain him in the lifestyle to which he has become accustomed (see FFN for more details).

## The Glowing Scablands



The Glowing Scablands stand between the southeastern corner of the Glowing Desert and the northeast corner of the Broken Deep; this border runs for hundreds of miles, but it is only here, where the border meets the Trembling Plains, that it is comprised of anything other than the sands of the Glowing Desert

drifting into the mouths of the Deep's canyons and ravines. A region of raised bedrock that has been eroded by the constant winds of the Barrier Wastes, the Glowing Scablands are filled with channels and rock basins interspersed amidst broad mesas and crumbling escarpments. Travel through the Scablands is relatively easy, but is rarely safe - the wide basins and channels between the cliffs and slopes are easy to navigate, but the crumbled rock and stones that fill them make the journey fraught. The Glowing Scablands take their name from the same eerie luminescence that permeates the nearby Glowing Desert - the rocks and sand faintly glow at night. Strangely, neither the mesas nor cliffs in the area share this glow; only once they have crumbled to the ground do the stones and sand begin to glow.

While the winds here are just as intense as those that blow across the Glowing Desert, the bandits of the Barrier Wastes rarely make use of their infamous sail carts in the Glowing Scablands. The tortured landscape makes the use of such wind-powered carts dangerous at best, and the broken, rock-filled terrain makes it nearly impossible. Instead, the bandits often circle around the Scablands on their sail carts, and then stash the carts to make raids in the southern Trembling Plains on foot, where the winds are too weak to power the carts.

### Durzghab

Burrowed into a hillock in the far southern tip of what is now the Glowing Scablands, 100 miles due west of Azeth's Rest and 40 miles north of Whistlegap, sits an

### What is a Sail Cart?

The bandits of the Barrier Wastes build their carts out of the hollow, lightweight bones of crodlu and other birds. Most denizens of the Trembling Plains do not realize that the carts on their own are as useless as most silt skimmers bereft of their obsidian engine orbs. With an ordinary sail, the weight of the passengers would cause the sail cart's wheels to dig into the sand, and the mast of the sail cart would snap under the severe winds. The bandits of the Barrier Wastes have crafted psionic sails that lighten the load of the carts, like the *skate* power, and allow persons with certain abilities (see *Faces of the Forgotten North*) to navigate the wind cart under the unique circumstances of the Barrier Wastes. The bandits usually bury their sand carts at the edge of the Wastes when raiding.

abandoned goblin camp dug into a hill. The goblins called this place Durzghab ("Flayed Lizard"), but the nearby nikaal slavers - the Crisiss - call it Watch Rock. The nikaal often camp near Watch Rock, sending lookouts to the summit to scan the desert for potential captives. The summit gives an excellent view of the barrens to the north, the Trembling Plains to the southeast, and an amazingly penetrating view of the Broken Deep. The Crisiss do not know of the passages beneath the hill.

The tunnels of Durzghab consist of narrow, hastily-dug passages with alcoves, where the goblins dug into the soft tufa stone to hide from the sun and Daskinor's spies. The camp was used many times over the early decades of the Cleansing Wars, when goblin bands fleeing north from the Ringing Mountains hid here en route to the cities of the southern White Mountains. No goblins remained in Durzghab when Daskinor's army marched by, but a variety of their bone cookware and other household items may be found in the alcoves along the tunnel walls.

### Rocklips Gulp Oasis

Just northeast of where the Glowing Scablands meet the sands of the Glowing Desert, and seventy miles west by northwest from Azeth's Rest, lies the oasis of Rocklips Gulp. According to legend, Rocklips was a fearsome terek who discovered the well, or dug it (stories vary). Rocklips lived about a King's Age ago, and once he found the well, he settled there and dominated it for the rest of his life. He was such a formidable character that elves, kreen, gith, and others

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all came to respect and trade with him, since he proved a terrible enemy and seemed to lead a charmed life. When he died, it was elves who raised a cairn over him beside the well.

Rocklips Gulp is a rocky islet in the barrens, where a scattering of hardy zaals and stunted saedras grow in

the cracks in the rock. The well itself is a generally circular pit in the gray stone, about 7 feet across, with water several feet deep in its base. The water is brown but lacks any ill taste and seems to bubble up reliably from year to year. Since Rocklips himself died, no one has lived at the oasis, but both the Swift Wing elves and the Crisiss nikaal often stop there for water.

## **The Broken Deep**

The Broken Deep separates the Glowing Desert from the four westernmost sections of the Trembling Plains: Whistlegap, Hammer's Head, Giant's Hollow, and the Blood Prairie. The eastern end of the Broken Deep borders on the southern reaches of the Last Steppe, and the western edge of the Broken Deep extends almost into the Hinterlands, ending merely 70 miles northeast of the Dragon's Crown mountains.

Rather than towering above the Trembling Plains like Tembo Turrets to the south, the badlands of the Broken Deep *descend* as one heads northward. For the most part, the tops of the mesas, buttes, and other stone columns maintain the same ground level as the Trembling Plains. Travelers often think that they see the scrub plains continuing northward, but as they come within a few dozen feet of the edge, the cracks in the ground ahead become apparent. A traveler that continues northward without descending into the cracks soon reaches the edge of an impassable cliff. For land-based creatures, the only way northward is to descend into the Broken Deep.

The Deep resembles other badlands but suffers from flooding during the Windflood and Fruitbirth seasons, due to the heavy rainfall in Windflood. Standing for weeks, the water fouls and becomes a breeding ground for disease, as well as for biting insects and other vermin. Eventually, the heat of Flamesky drives off the stagnant water.

Occasionally, far-ranging pridemanes or other, rarer types of wemic undead leap from column to column across the top of the Broken Deep, but they never look into the canyons, unless someone draws their attention to the canyons (e.g. shouts at the pridemanes or shoots a missile at them).

### **Dry Spring**

At the lowest part of the Broken Deep, water wells up in a small 30-foot pool. Unfortunately, one can only

find the spring during the driest seasons - Flamesky, Coldnights, and Ral's Rest - because during Windflood and Fruitbirth seasons, filthy, disease-ridden standing water drains from all over the Broken Deep and mingles with the spring's waters. Once the land dries back out, and the fouled waters are gone, the spring's waters are once again visible. Though it never dries out, the waters of the spring itself never become diseased, perhaps because of some mineral in the water, or because someone has placed a cistern fiend in the spring, which quickly cleans it when the other water dries up.

### **Tambrak Mountains**

The Tambrak Mountains are a small range of ancient peaks that erupt from the broken and crumbling landscape of the Broken Deep about 25 miles north of Dry Spring, with a dozen or so peaks stretching across a 15-mile span in a roughly west to east line. From a quick glance at a map, the Tambraks might appear to be a northern outcrop of the Ringing Mountains to the south-west, but the Tambraks are geologically distinct from the Ringing Mountains, being more like the eroded, low-lying crags of the Mekillot Mountains than the soaring peaks of the Ringing Mountains. None of the dozen peaks stretches more than 2,000 feet in height, with many barely scraping a thousand.

These mountains have long supported a range of flora and fauna. Erdlu flocks and hives of wild kanks wander the lower elevations, feeding off the scrub grasses found there. Gaj, crystal spiders, and silk wyrms are common predators of the Tambraks, along with a concerning number of id fiends.

Civilization long ago left these slopes. Before the Cleansing Wars, only the troll settlement of Krel Ambrol nestled here in the lower lying, easterly peaks of the range. During the Wars, goblins hastily excavated the fortress of Dzhuzhak in the far eastern



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hills of the Tambraks. Neither the trolls of Krel Ambrol, nor the goblins of Dzhuzhak survived the Wars, and their settlements are now nought but ruins.

### Krel Ambrol

Krel Ambrol was founded in the Green Age by trolls who had been forced out of the White Mountains by the faster breeding goblins of that range. At the time of its founding, the town sat atop a low-lying peak in the eastern Tambrak Mountains, above a large forest which covered the land below for miles. Its location,

facing east, was perfectly suited for views of the sunrise, an important religious element to the more traditionalist, northern trolls. By a quirk of geography, the sunset was also visible from Krel Ambrol, descending directly between two of the mountains in the western part of the range.

The town is of typical northern trollish construction: buildings made of large stone slabs, with every building's front door, and many windows, facing east to allow the rising sun to bless the inhabitants. Even today, thousands of years after it was abandoned, the

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structures remain largely intact. Carved stone bowls and cups lie fallen under stone tables. Stone beds, their straw and cloth mattresses long since turned to dust, sit next to stone cupboards. Ornate carvings still grace the doorways and window frames of each building in the ancient troll language.

There are two distinct parts to the town: the higher buildings near the top of the peak are older, larger, and more ornate in their decoration, while the dwellings further down the eastern slope are smaller, plainer, and were clearly constructed in a hurry. When Myron of Yoram, the first Troll Scorcher, came north to the Tablelands, he pushed the trolls out of the Kreegill Mountains, driving them into the wilderness. Many troll refugees arrived at Krel Ambrol and were given shelter. A series of basic fortifications were begun at Krel Ambrol in case the Champion came to the Tambraks, but Myron didn't turn north, instead choosing to remain in the Tablelands and pursue the trolls living there.

Believing the danger had passed, the trolls of Krel Ambrol relaxed and instead turned their attention to stopping the goblins from building their fortress of Dzhuzhak. It was only after the troll oracles returned from Star Rock with the knowledge that Daskinor and Myron served the same master that the trolls stopped hindering the goblins.

Daskinor's army had no interest in the trolls, beyond making examples of any saboteurs encountered. When Daskinor himself arrived after Dzhuzhak's fall, he noted the troll settlement in the mountains above, but ignored it. Krel Ambrol's reprieve, however, was short lived. The destruction of the lands below them, wrought by Daskinor's defilers, forced the trolls to abandon their homes in search of a place capable of supporting life. By the time Myron was replaced by Manu of Deche, the last troll who remembered Krel Ambrol was long dead.

### **Star Rock**

One of many mesas in the western portion of the Broken Deep, Star Rock gets its name from the unnamed structure built on its crumbling surface. Colossal stones called dolmens are set upon each other in threes, forming stark, doorway-like structures. These doorways stand in circular formations, and Star Rock includes four intact concentric circles. On the eastern side of the formation, the outermost circle has two isolated doorway-like structures forming part of a second level. If one stands in the right location, these

outer doorways capture the sunrise on the mornings of Highest Sun and Lowest Sun.

Sages have referred to the Star Rock structure as a "primitive orrery", but the truth is that no one has ever built a more accurate device, if one knew how to use it properly. Trolls began construction on Star Rock during the dawn of the Rebirth and spent two thousand years completing it. Unfortunately, over the ages, wanderers have stolen the tablets containing instructions and information learned from King's Ages of studying the stars. These thieves also removed the original crystal blocks that belong in some of the doorways. At certain times of the day, these blocks focused sunbeams on specific troll-runes carved into the dolmens.

Astronomers that have studied Star Rock agree that if one were to replace or re-create the original crystals, that one could not only predict the movement of celestial bodies with perfect accuracy, but also gain tremendous knowledge regarding the past and future. Since recent celestial events such as the Messenger's failure to appear and the Hour of Blue Sun, a growing number of astronomers have made pilgrimages to Star Rock, where, they believe, lie the answers.

Star Rock is further detailed in the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting 3rd Edition Revised Rules*.

### **The Temple of the Unfettered Mind**

Within one of the newer chasms in the Broken Deep, 25 miles southeast of Dry Spring, a tiny clan of 45 isolationist kenku - the Sky Speakers - holds out in a ruined Green Age temple set into two opposite cliff faces. About thirty years ago, an earthquake tore a 15 ft. chasm through a butte, cleaving it along with the temple it contained, revealing part of an underground complex sealed since the Green Age. Today, kenku watchmen stand guard over their new lair, a chamber with two cave entrances.

This was not an elemental temple but rather a temple dedicated to the wild, unrestrained use of the Way, untainted by training. The kenku tried killing the abbot, a meorty released by the earthquake, but the meorty now dwells side by side with the kenku after they finally gave up trying to kill him and listened to what he had to say. The abbot told the kenku that they were superior to other races because they used a natural form of psionics rather than a "coerced"

## Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains VI.1

psionic discipline. The kenku “sensed the truth” of his words and adopted the meorty as their tribal shaman.

Like other kenku, the Sky Speakers use drop-darts to hunt for mekillots, which they find in abundance in season in the Trembling Plains. Most members of the tribe are wilders.

The Sky Speakers are very furtive, flying close to the ground and often hiding under rocks or behind scrub; Silvaarak aarakocra particularly terrify them. They sometimes raid caravans, taking care to leave no

survivors and to make it look like someone else was responsible. They use solo night flights far out over the Silt Sea as shock treatments for awakening psionic talents. These flights over the silt occasionally result in kenku being captured by Eldaarish templars and used as sacrifices at Fire Dawn ceremonies in Eldaarich – the Eldaarish consider the kenku a sub variety of aarakocra. A handful of rogue kenku have left their clan over the years; these are often powerful wilders, although the most infamous kenku have been assassins.

## Whistlegap



South of Dry Spring, the Trembling Plains stretch through a narrow passage between two stretches of badlands – Tembo Turrets and the Broken Deep. This narrow neck of scrub plains is called Whistlegap because of the loud, almost deafening sound the winds make as they rush through the area whenever a strong wind (or stronger) arises from the west. The Eloy clans that pasture in Whistlegap place wax in their ears whenever the winds spring up, and their flocks are all deaf. During hurricane-strength winds, the ground actually shakes with the sound, and any glass containers are at risk of breaking from the vibration.

## Tembo Turrets

The rocky badlands south of Whistlegap known as Tembo Turrets are full of tall, jagged pillars of rock, all riddled with holes that whistle in the wind; many tembo burrow beneath the bases of these rock spires, giving the area its name. Tanysh cities used to dot this land in the Green Age, but now little remains of them except for a few ruins, some precariously situated on top of the pillars. Carsys, Yorum, and Ysmen had already passed their prime by the Time of Magic, and before the Cleansing Wars had even begun, these cities had already become such nests of defilers that the topsoil of the once green hills had largely turned to dust. By the time of the Cleansing Wars, humans could no longer inhabit these lands; the winds had carried their topsoil into the Sunrise Sea. Trolls, driven from their native Kreegill Mountains by Myron of Yorum, returned the favor by moving into what remained of the lands of Myron's childhood. Myron's failure to

aggressively target the trolls in this unforgiving area was one of the many factors that led to the Champion's fall from grace with Rajaat. Myron's replacement, Manu of Deche, showed no such reluctance to root out the trolls inhabiting the Turrets and the whole area was put to the sword and scorched by flame in short order.

All but a handful of buildings have slid from the jagged pillars that remain of the ancient hills. Occasionally, one can spot sewer tunnels or other underground city features in the middle of the broken pillars of stone, but a lone column, part of a wall, or a series of tunnels will typically be all that remains.

A tribe of aarakocra lives atop several clusters of larger turrets. This tribe has no relations or dealings with the Silvaarak, and if they were to meet, the Silvaarak would regard them with as much suspicion as they would a kenku or a gith

### Hammer's Head

Beyond Whistlegap, the Trembling Plains open out into a wide, roughly semicircular area of scrub plains known as the Hammer's Head. Slave raiders from the Tablelands target the Eloy in this area incessantly, and accordingly fewer Eloy dwell here than in the Last Steppe. Those Eloy that do live here rarely raid each other's flocks, having formed a loose confederation to avoid or resist slavers. Deeply suspicious of strangers, they presume that every invader is a slave raider, and set poisoned traps that rival any found in the Forest Ridge. Some of the clans remain on good terms with

the plains giants of Giant's Hollow. It costs dearly in cattle and services to maintain this alliance, but many Eloy find it convenient to have allies that can swing a 20-foot-long club.

House M'ke remains the most notorious slaving organization in these parts, but M'ke actually has not sponsored slave raids since Abalach-Re's demise. The Crisiss nikaal tribe has taken up the slack, though, providing a steady supply of Eloy slaves to the nobles of the Tablelands.

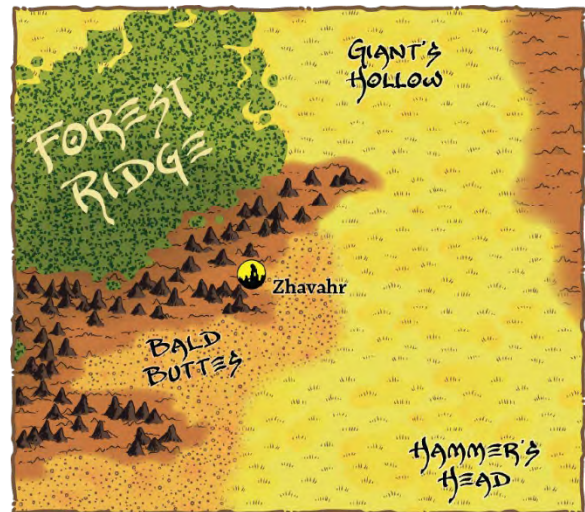
### Giant's Hollow

Aside from the Blood Prairie - which is often not considered part of the Trembling Plains - Giant's Hollow is the westmost portion of the Trembling Plains, located between the Ringing Mountains and the Broken Deep. Plains giants raise their herds here, mostly erdlands and inixes.

The Spinefists clan of giants are on fair terms with quite a few of the nearby herder clans. For some of the Eloy clans, the Spinefists offer retaliation services, staging retaliatory attacks on the clans' enemies in exchange for a hefty fee (always paid in livestock). Bandits attempted to purchase the same services from the giants, but were unable to pay in cattle and were instead pounded into jelly.

The Spinefists clan get their name from their habit of fighting with dried tufts of spinifex grass in their hands, with the sharp leaves coming out between their fingers. Arguably a crude weapon, the tufts are nonetheless painful to those struck, though how the giants harden the leaves is a well-kept secret.

During Ral's Rest, the Spinefists send a trading party west to Azeth's Rest to meet with armorers and other Kurnan merchants at House Azeth's trade fair, trading their erdlands for clothing and other custom-made leather goods. One group of Spinefists regularly stops in Azeth's Rest between the seasonal trade fairs, as they have a special arrangement with House Azeth to accompany the Great Caravan as far north as Fort Stench. This giant escort serves to remind bandits of the last time that Azeth's Great Caravan was attacked: House Azeth hired the Spinefists to send the bandits of Kel's Lot a message that they were not likely to forget.



In the eleven years since, no raiders from the Bandit States have dared to strike at the Great Caravan.

An offshoot of the Spinefists calling themselves the Skyglass clan also dwell in Giant's Hollow. The Skyglass clan derives its name from the large glass boulders that they hurl as weapons, and the brick-sized glass chunks that they use as sling bullets. In addition to inflicting the normal damage, the glass boulders and sling stones shatter and cause damage to others in the area. The giants obtain this glass from several Eloy and elven clans, who dig the glass up from the Storm Coast, where lightning often fuses knots of sand into large glass chunks. They trade the glass, and occasionally animals, to the giants in return for protection from bandits, gith, and others, though the giants generally prefer not to tangle with Red Guard

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patrols. This exchange of glass for protection is referred to as Kelbar's Bargain, after the Eloy leader who first placated raiding giants with the glass, and subsequently developed the trade relationship.

Whatever the cause of their split, Skyglass clan is currently on good terms with the Spinefists, due to a recent slew of marriages between the two clans.

### **Bald Buttes**

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Fourteen miles southeast of where the northern edge of the Ringing Mountains meets the Trembling Plains, a narrow strip of badlands known as Bald Buttes hides the ruin of Zhavahr, an ancient goblin fortress.

Technically part of the foothills of the northern Ringing Mountains, the Bald Buttes are an area of desolate, rocky badlands. A number of pitched battles were fought here during the mid-Cleansing Wars, and life has not quite managed to re-establish itself in the ages since.

The buttes themselves are the remains of bare domes of granite that represent the earliest folds of the mountains that tower over them. None of the buttes reaches more than 500 feet high, save for the solitary finger of stone that is Zhavahr, which towers over 1,000 feet into the sky. Hoodoos (tall, thin spires of rock) and other eroded rock formations predominate in the area.

Despite its bleakness, however, there are some small signs of life here. Stunted shrubs, cacti, and other plants can be found in sheltered spots. Local insects and rodents feed on the plants and each other, and larger predators in turn subsist off these creatures.

### **Zhavahr**

The Bald Buttes contain the ancient goblin fortress of Zhavahr. Indeed, Zhavahr is the reason for the existence of these stoney barrens, with their origins dating back to the Cleansing Wars.

This is the most desolate place north of the Dead Lands. No plant life exists within one mile of the ruined fortress, and animals will not willingly approach any closer. Intelligent creatures feel uneasy within a mile of the ruins, but generally can't identify a reason why. The complete absence of plant life has resulted in sterile sand and bare rock dominating a one mile radius around the ruins.

Similar to an obsidian plain, the mile-wide zone around Zhavahr cannot be used to tap energy for arcane spellcasting. While scrolls, wands, and other magic items work normally - and elemental magic remains unaffected - any attempt by a preserver or defiler to draw spell energy within the zone fails. The few wizards who've experimented near Zhavahr have noted that there is a sharp boundary. Exactly one mile from the ruins, spell energy can be gathered normally, but step inside the perimeter and the ability to gather energy simply shuts off; even plants on the other side of the border can't be induced to surrender their life energy.

Within the dead zone, the remains of several military roads and watchtowers can be found. The ruins themselves occupy a spire of rock that thrusts a thousand feet into the sky, visible for many miles around.

Zhavahr is one of the many goblin ruins of the Ringing Mountains, but is the only one near the Trembling Plains, and therefore the only one described in this book (see Chapter Seven: "Dead Cities" for information on the ruins themselves).

### **The Blood Prairie**

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At the far western extent of Giant's Hollow, a narrow neck of scrubland between the Forest Ridge and the Broken Deep leads to another broad area of scrubland known as the Blood Prairie.

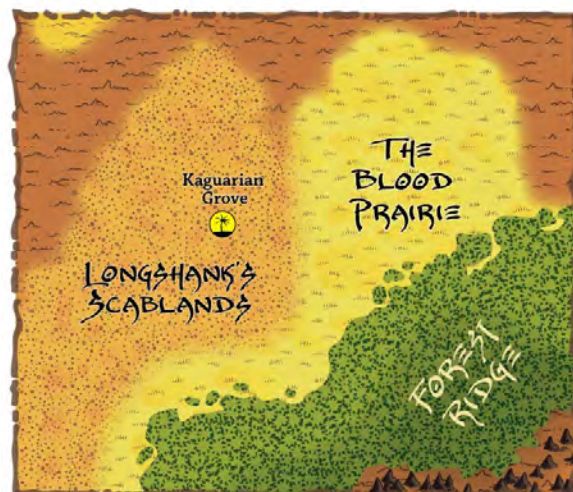
Some confusion exists as to whether the Blood Prairie is part of the Trembling Plains. The Wanderer's own maps alternately connect the Trembling Plains to the

Blood Prairie, or connect the Rohorind forest to the Broken Deep, *depending on which way one overlays the maps*. The Eloy used to vehemently argue that the Blood Prairie was not part of the Trembling Plains, but they abandoned this argument when confronted by the plains giants of Giant's Hollow whose cousins, the Big Lizard clan, have dwelt in the Blood Prairie for

## Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains VI.1

generations. The giants of Giant's Hollow took exception that their cousins were seemingly being excluded from Trembling Plains society, and the Eloy, desperate to maintain friendly relations with their massive neighbors, dropped the subject completely.

The Big Lizard clan takes their name from the animals they herd and use as mounts - colossal lizards known as korinth that dwell west of the Blood Prairie, in Longshank's Scablands. The Big Lizard clan claims as its territory most of the scrubland west of the Ringing Mountains, but they rarely venture within a day's travel of the Forest Ridge. The giants capture the korinth in the hills and badlands of the Scablands to the west, and pasture them in the Blood Prairie's plains.



### Longshank's Scablands

Longshank's Scablands are a region of hilly badlands located west of the Blood Prairie. The Scablands extend almost directly north from the jungles of the Forest Ridge, and stand in stark contrast to the nearby Broken Deep, with the elevated mesas and buttes of the Scablands rising high above the canyons and crumbling gullies of the Deep.

The Scablands are named for the first plains giant to discover korinths there and domesticate them, and are the only known home of korinths, massive gray-colored lizards with huge spikes jutting from their backs that the Draji use as patrol mounts. Korinths can obviously survive outside the scablands, as the giants from the Big Lizard clan capture the creatures and pasture them in the plains of the Blood Prairie to the east, and the Draji have korinth that are at least one hundred years old. However, all efforts to breed korinths in captivity have failed, so there is clearly something special about the scablands for korinths.

Very little loose soil can be found in Longshank's Scablands; what little erodes off the landscape seems to get caught up in swirling eddies of wind and blown down into the canyons of the Broken Deep. Where dirt and loose stones do pile up, however, it's invariably at the base of one of the Scablands' escarpments and beneath a clawed-out cavity in the rock. These small hollows are usually located ten to fifteen feet above the ground and are former korinth egg nests; female korinth dig a hollow with their claws and lay a clutch of five to eight eggs within before repacking it with the loose soil. The young korinths hatch about two months later and make a run for safety. Few korinth hatchlings

survive to adulthood, but those that do soon outgrow their natural predators, becoming too large for nearly all predators to bring down.

Once the hatchlings have vacated them, the korinth hollows serve as ready-made burrows for all manner of creatures - including the local humanoids. Tari and renegade halflings make their homes in Longshank's Scablands, expanding the disused hollows into family-sized shelters, or even warrens, of interconnected chambers. The tari and halflings constantly compete with each other for space and resources, so they tend to dwell in different areas of the Scablands. The halflings are generally outcasts from the Forest Ridge and so settle most frequently in the southern half of the area, while the tari have learned to stick to the northern reaches for their own protection (the halflings are just as happy to hunt the tari as they are other game). Both the tari and halflings venture into the surrounding Blood Prairie and Broken Deep to forage, and these forays are the source of the rumors that "tari and halflings live underground in the Prairie like rodents." Long accustomed to living in burrows, both groups have taken to digging small pits into the plains for use as emergency shelters when Big Lizard clan giants and their korinths come around. The elves of the Moon Racers tribe venture into the Blood Prairie often enough that they have seen halflings and tari - who are often eager to trade with the elves - pop out of these pits once the giants have gone, and have decided that these diminutive humanoids must dwell beneath the plains. For their part, the halflings also welcome the

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arrival of the Moon Racers - as a potential source of food.

### **Kaguarian Grove**

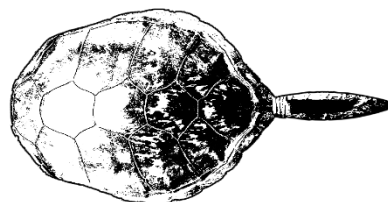
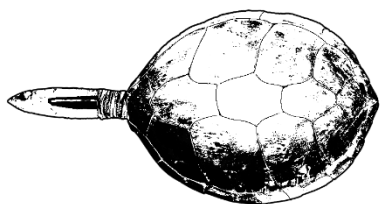
Filling the vale between two great mesas is a veritable forest of highly unusual trees. Not known to grow anywhere else on Athas, these trees generally reach a height of 50 feet tall, have wine-red trunks, and are often nearly 16 inches thick. Known as kaguarian trees, their wood is highly resistant to decay and rot, and is possessed of an extraordinary hardness. Kaguarian wood was highly valued in the Green Age; its rich purple-red color, durability, and straight, consistent grain led to it being associated with prosperity and incorruptibility, so kaguarian wood was often used in the construction of thrones, council chambers, and judges benches. These trees were commonly known as "break axe" trees in the Green Age, however, due to their exceptional resistance to cutting, and even with the psionically-enhanced tools of the age, only the greatest and most skilled woodworkers attempted to shape it.

The stand of trees itself is also home to a number of other plants and animals that are unknown and likely extinct elsewhere on Athas. Legend holds that a powerful druid guards this small forest and the living relics within, and the legends are for once true - a powerful pyreen maintains the grove as their guarded lands, and protects the grove from all intruders. On occasion, however, the guardian pyreen will observe a wandering druid, preserver, or other like-minded individual defending the grove from prospective woodcutters or defilers and invite the defender to stay within the grove for a time. The tales of these lucky few are the source of many of the legends regarding the Kaguarian Grove.

### **Mountain Lake**

In the Broken Deep, water steadily accumulates in the canyons and hollows during Windflood, fouling and becoming a breeding ground for disease and biting insects before evaporating in Fruitbirth. Water sometimes accumulates atop the surrounding mesas, but it rarely lasts long before evaporating. But nearby Mountain Lake, as this large mesa has come to be called, boasts a 10-foot deep, 180 by 60-foot wide lake whose water level stays constant throughout the year, despite the unrelenting sun. Beneath the shallow waters, which are as cold and colorless as glacial meltwater, lies a submerged burial ground marked by a complex geometric design. Known as a mandala, the design is made out of smooth, tightly packed pebbles in pale greens, pinks, reds, and dark grays - rocks not native to the region. The mandala is a memorial to a now-forgotten pyreen who died atop the mesa, memorialized by their fellows who brought hand-picked river pebbles from distant lands.

An elemental spring has sprung up around the grave, now at the heart of the biggest oasis in the badlands. The mesa is home to lush vegetation and a colony of birds that feed upon the arthropods, insects, and small lizards of the badlands. The lake's frigid water - preternaturally devoid of waterborne life and insect larvae - is safe to drink and never turns stagnant. Passing drakes have long been attracted by the elemental energies of the spring, and many have returned to it over the years when it is their time to die, their bleached bones coming to litter the top of the mesa. No druid protects the area, but the scent of drakes keeps most large beasts at bay, and there is often a live drake at the site which, despite its impending death, will still fight out of sheer instinct.



## Bordering The Tablelands



Located east of the Ringing Mountains and bordering much of the northern Tablelands, Hammer's Head is one of the most common places for residents of the Trembling Plains and Tablelands to interact, second only to where the trade road leaves Fort Ral and enters the Last Steppe.

### Fort Xalis

A House M'ke fortress, Fort Xalis, lies just south of the ruined city of Yaramuke and southwest of Raam. The fort was built as a stopping point between Raam and Urik, and over the years has also served as a base for slave raiders who stalk Eloy herders. Fort Xalis has a well that feeds from a pure source, untainted by the nearby cursed Black Waters oasis (see below). In recent months, the Dedys Consortium has used Fort Xalis as a stop on the way to Azeth's Rest, through the Trembling Plains.

### The Black Waters

The oasis known as the Black Waters sits near the ruins of Yaramuke, halfway between the cities of Urik and Raam. When King Hamanu of Urik destroyed Yaramuke, he and his enemy, Sielba, used terrible magic that left the oasis poisoned and cursed (see the *Black Flames* adventure for more details).

### The Kreegill Mountains

This mountain formation stands directly between Draj and Yaramuke. The southern face of the mountains looks like one of the driest mountainous areas in all of Athas, but on the northern face, the moisture from the winds allows limited vegetation to grow near the peaks, including spindly trees with narrow moisture-collecting leaves. The small clan of brown-feathered aarakocra that live in these mountains use their vantage point to pick out Eloy herds in the Hammer's Head for raiding. Unknown to the rest of the clan, an older aarakocra named Tethka, who lost an eye to an Eloy herder's arrow long ago, sells reconnaissance information on the Eloy herders to House M'ke slavers based in Ft. Xalis in exchange for gold and other shiny baubles.

Those with human ancestry should avoid the Kreegills. Ancient troll habitations dot the mountains, and any human or partially human creature, if bearing flame or speaking aloud in the vicinity, may awaken vengeful undead trolls known as scorched drummers (see *FFN* for more details).

### The Sun's Fist

This region of mixed stony barrens and salt flats located northwest of Yaramuke is one of the hottest and harshest climates in all of Athas. The winds that cool and moisten the Trembling Plains never touch these broken lands.

### Quraite

Shielded from the Sun's Fist by a set of low hills, Quraite is a large, lush, and surprisingly secret oasis thanks to a community of druids that dwells in the circle of trees at the oasis' center. Grain fields mark the oasis' perimeter, and each field has its own brick well. An elven tribe named the Moon Racers provides Quraite with its main trade link, stopping in the village on its journey from Urik to Kurn through the Trembling Plains. The Moon Racers help to keep Quraite's existence a secret, less out of good will towards the people of Quraite than out of respect for the spirit of that land. Secrecy happens to be in the Moon Racers' interests as well; the elves do not wish



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others to know their inexpensive source of medicinal herbs and powders such as zarneeka.

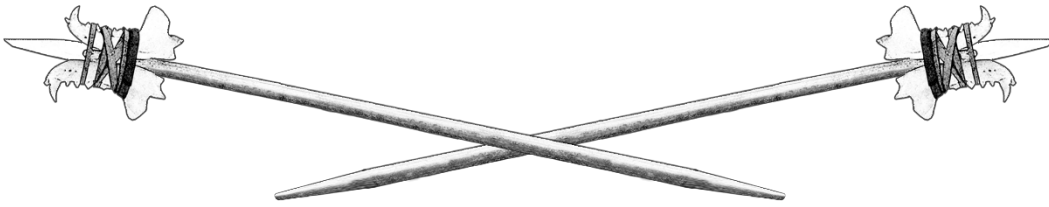
### **Yaramuke**

Lying near the Black Waters, Yaramuke is a ruined city whose few remaining structures are oddly reminiscent of those of Nibenay. Ages ago, a beautiful sorceress named Sielba ruled Yaramuke as queen. Sielba quarreled with King Hamanu of Urik over possession of the Smoking Crown's obsidian quarries and Hamanu resolved the dispute by razing Yaramuke to

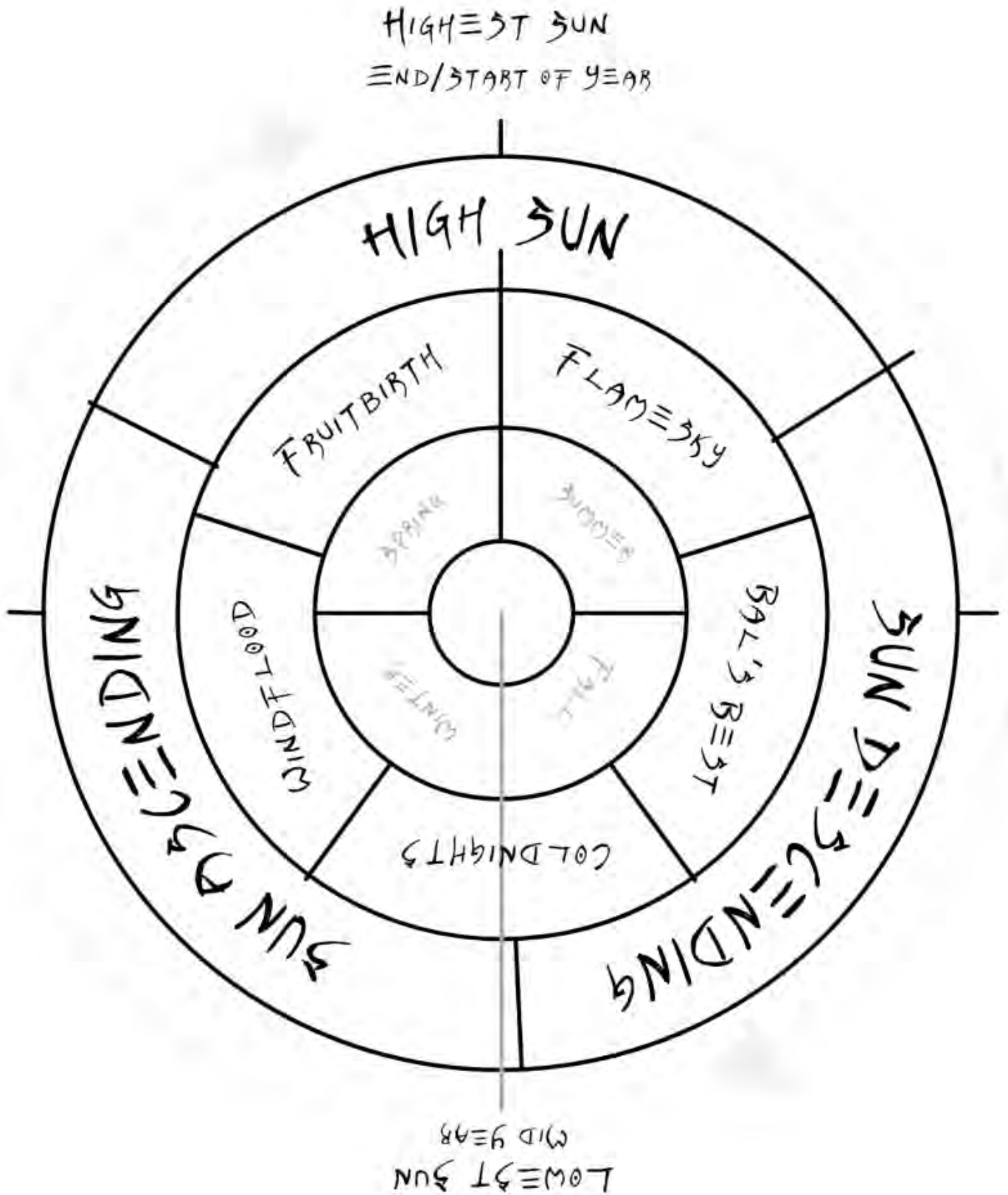
the ground, using such terrible magic that even the waters were fouled forever. Legend holds that Sielba's treasure is still buried beneath the ruins of her palace, but few ever return from Yaramuke (see *the Black Flames* adventure for more details).

*"Whatever you do, don't drink from either the pool or the stream that runs out of it. ...You would also be well advised to avoid camping near this oasis; it is haunted by the specters of those who did not read (or heed) this warning."*

-The Wanderer's Journal



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## Chapter Four: The Five Seasons

*"We have Fruitbirth and Flamesky*

*Whenever the sun is high.*

*Ral Rests in Cold Nights*

*When the sun descends out of sight.*

*Cold Nights become Windflood*

*When the sun ascends to warm the world."*

- Kurnan children's school rhyme

Unlike most known regions of Athas, the seasons in the Trembling Plains vary strikingly, and natural weather is absolutely predictable to those that understand the region's natural complexity. Unnatural weather, such as the recent Tyr-storms, is another matter entirely. Air-worshipping herders of the Trembling Plains had what amounts to a crisis of faith when the first Tyr-

storm to hit the Trembling Plains brought heavy destructive rains during Coldnights. So far, no subsequent Tyr-storm has hit the Trembling Plains, and the general weather pattern remains much as it was before, but no one knows when another Tyr-storm might strike.

The periods for the Trembling Plains seasons are identical to the quints of the Urikite calendar, but the Trembling Plains seasons are uniquely named. During Flamesky, the Trembling Plains enjoy a typical Athasian climate of hot days and cool nights, and during Fruitbirth, even the nights can be uncomfortably warm, but during the rest of the year, the days on the plains cool down considerably. Because the Trembling Plains are so large and border on so many other regions, the seasons affect not only weather but encounters as well.

### Highest Sun

The Trembling Plains' Highest Sun corresponds to Highest Sun on the Merchant's Calendar, the first day of a new calendar year (see The Ivory Triangle for details on the Calendar of Nibenay, also known as the Merchant's Calendar).

True to its name, this first day of Flamesky is the beginning of the hottest and longest days of the year, and there is no wind. Not even bandits roam the Trembling Plains during Highest Sun, although they sometimes make one last raid immediately afterward, in early Flamesky. In Kurn, Azeth's Rest, and the entrenched camps in the badlands outside the Trembling Plains where some herders have holed up for Flamesky, no one works except for the watchmen. Those who have sufficient water drench their clothes in an effort to survive the heat. No one sleeps the night before Highest Sun; there is music and dancing, and for those who can afford it, broy that has been kept buried deep in the ground, just for this occasion. They celebrate because the night may be their last; because of the heat, more elderly Eloy die on Highest Sun than on the rest of the days combined.

Eloy who have camps in the badlands retreat to deep caves or holes in the earth - just a few feet below the surface, temperatures are dramatically cooler. Among the more hardened western clans, the elderly wander

#### Weather and Natural Hazards during Highest Sun

On the days following Highest Sun, temperatures in the Trembling Plains and surrounding deserts and badlands invariably rise to 150° (65° C) during late afternoon, and there is no wind to give respite from the terrible heat. From 8AM through 11 AM, and from 6 PM to 11 PM, persons not in the shade must make Fortitude saves against the heat every hour. From 11 AM to 6 PM, unshaded persons must make Fortitude saves every 10 minutes, and persons above ground but in the shade, must make Fortitude checks every hour. To escape the deadly heat, a character should either seek refuge in a cool cave or tunnel, or should find shade and gradually splash two days worth of water rations on his clothing to help cool off. The nights before and after Highest Sun are pleasantly cool.

off into the wilderness to let predators and the elements take them to keep from slowing down their clan.

When the Highest Sun sun sets, those that can, celebrate their survival; others rest.

### **Flamesky Season**

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After Highest Sun, a light wind picks up from the south, and all clouds are gone from the sky in days. This marks the beginning of Flamesky Season, which in Merchant Calendar terms begins on the 1st day of the year, Dominary 1st, and ends on the 75th day of the year, Fortuary 15th.

Berries, ranging from delicious to mildly poisonous, ripen. By the end of the season, most of these dry to raisins and fall uneaten due to no one remaining to eat them; this marks the coming of the “kreen”. Until this dangerous season passes, most herders sell off large portions from their herds and shelter themselves in Azeth’s Rest or in Kurn’s trade district.

As the skies and mud dry up, and the heat of summer sets in earnest, the “kreen”—who are actually trin—swarm in from various barren lands to feed on the herds of the Trembling Plains. Even the bandits avoid the area during these months. The mighty mekillot herds are decimated and dispersed by the ravenous trin hordes. Some years, mini-kanks and locust swarms have been known to sweep the plains. Actual kreen do move in to hunt as well, but most of these do not pose the same threat to humanoids as the trin do.

By the end of the Flamesky season, game is depleted and the trin depart for cooler lands both to the north and to the south where game can still be found. Most of the trin linger until the end of the season, taunted by the sounds and smell of prey within the walls of forts like Azeth’s Rest, South Guard, and Conak’s Rock. Occasionally, they will attempt an unsuccessful attack against Conak’s Rock or Azeth’s Rest. The trin attack South Guard every year, typically during the last week of Flamesky.

Because all of the creatures that could appreciate dried fruit are either dead or hiding behind walls, anyone mad enough to travel the Trembling Plains during Flamesky will find hordes of trin, a few kreen, burnflowers, and all of the delicious bush raisins that one can pick. Drik wander into the scrublands seeking trin, whom they apparently find a particularly tasty treat. The feeling is mutual, so the rule is “let the strongest creatures dine”. The few tari that live near the Trembling Plains go into hibernation to avoid the rampaging trin.

### **Ral’s Rest Season**

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In Merchant Calendar terms, Ral’s Rest begins on the 76th day of the year, Fortuary 16th, and ends on the 150th day of the year, Fifthover 25th.

In the eastern stretch of the Trembling Plains, the cold winds from the White Mountains pick up in the mornings, making mornings as uncomfortably cold as the nights. The Spinefist clan, one of the nomadic plains giant clans that roams the far western reaches of the Trembling Plains, sends a trading party west to Azeth’s Rest to meet with armorers and other Kurnan merchants and artisans who travel to one of House Azeth’s trade fairs. Tembo packs periodically intrude on the plains from the deserts to the west, despite being hunted by nearly all the intelligent humanoids of the area. Xerichou maggots learn to fly and only pose a problem during this season.

Small temporary hills form as rotting underground plant and animal matter release gasses. While the hills seem convenient to get a vantage point, Eloy herders avoid the hills because they could burst at any time, releasing rotten-smelling flammable gas. Those trapped in a gas vent that does not ignite often lose consciousness from lack of breathable air. The resulting uneven and broken ground makes travel somewhat more difficult, but the rains of Windflood are coming soon, and will smooth everything down to a flat surface again.

Afternoon east winds, ranging from 20 to 60 mph, often bring the Gray Death as far inland as the trade road, and the eastern plains suffer from frequent silt storms the local herders call shamals, which can reach as far as the foothills of the Ringing Mountains.

## Coldnights Season

In Merchant Calendar terms, Coldnights begins on the 151st day of the year, Fifthover 26th, and ends on the 225th day of the year, Octavus 10th.

In Coldnights, cold winds pick up from the north, and most of the kreen and trin have departed for warmer, dryer lands. The days remain hot, but the nights become bitterly cold. The herders, having spent most of their year's wealth sheltering in the cities and forts during the summer months, take the remainder of their herds back onto the Trembling Plains. Red Guards frequently raid vulnerable travelers between Azeth's Rest and Conak's Rock, especially seeking dwarves, muls, and half-giants; Coldnights is South Guard's planting season, and South Guard needs slaves.

This season is when mekillots hatch. Because the eggs are typically buried 6 to 10 feet deep in the ground, the sight of mekillots hatching can be an astonishing sight to behold: it looks as if the young mekillots are

hatching from the ground itself, struggling and burrowing to the surface. Generally, the first mekling devours the other nearby eggs in order to gain the strength to break free of the ground. Many other creature's eggs hatch as well, and herders replenish their herds by capturing many of the wandering young such as crodlu, inix, and erdlu. Rasclinn sometimes wander out into the adjacent scrub plains from the nearby badlands. Azeth's caravans begin to depart, travelers take to the roads, and the bandits reappear.

The tari emerge from their hibernation with an uncontrollable desire to procure goods and supplies that overcomes their cultural shyness. During the Coldnights season, tari can often be found at House Azeth's trade fairs, in Kurn's trade district, or anywhere in between. The midpoint of the Coldnights season falls Lowest Sun, corresponding to Morrow 3rd.

## Windflood Season

In Merchant Calendar terms, Windflood begins on the 226th day of the year, Octavus 11th, and ends on the 300th day of the year, Anabasis 20th.

During Windflood season, winds blow in from the Jagged Cliffs west of the Trembling Plains, carrying heavy and dark, purplish rolling clouds. Near the eastern coast, these winds meet similar winds from the northwestern White Mountains. Rains occur frequently, often turning into heavy downpours. Short bursts of strong wind are common, and occasionally the winds can reach up to 50 mph. Tumbleweeds roll with the winds until they become too mired with mud to move. The ground can get dangerously muddy at this time - any holes or tunnels in the ground that are not expertly tiled and mortared collapse into mud. Kreen diligently avoid the Trembling Plains during Windflood season since the weather and mud foster chitin-rot. One comfort to travelers during the Windflood season: the cloud cover and moisture prevents the heat from escaping, resulting in nights that are not uncomfortably cold. Ground fog often forms in the early morning before sunrise - a phenomenon rarely seen above the Jagged Cliffs - causing herding clans to tend to seek lone hills for

### Flash Floods

The Trembling Plains contain several wadi - riverbeds that remain as dry as the one in the city of Tyr for most of the year. But during Windflood season, the dry riverbeds of the Trembling Plains often fill to overflowing with water, as water from higher ground rushes towards the coast. The snowmelt from the Snow Crowns combines with the heavy precipitation. During Windflood, many wadies become raging rivers. There are no bridges or fords, and those that cannot wade or jump across may need to swim across.

In badlands or mountains, individuals may instead find themselves caught by flash floods, rolling with logs and boulders.

pasture so they can spot stampedes on the horizon before it is too late.

Windflood is breeding season for mekillots. The few mekillots that survived the previous year's culling emerge to breed and lay eggs. Something about the local forage allows reptiles such as mekillots to grow and multiply more quickly than anywhere else on

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Athas. Typically, every female mekillot lays a clutch of eggs every few days, rolling the eggs into puddles where they sink deep, safe from all but the most diligent predators. The eggs hatch during Ral's Rest season.

In the foothills along the far western reaches of the Trembling Plains, Windflood is also breeding season for the korinth. It is easiest to find the rare korinth during this season because of its bellowing mating call, but hunters beware – undomesticated korinth are even more dangerous and aggressive during their mating time than any other time.

## **Fruitbirth Season**

In Merchant Calendar terms, Fruitbirth begins on the 301st day of the year, Anabasis 21st, and ends on the 375th day of the year, Zenalia 5th.

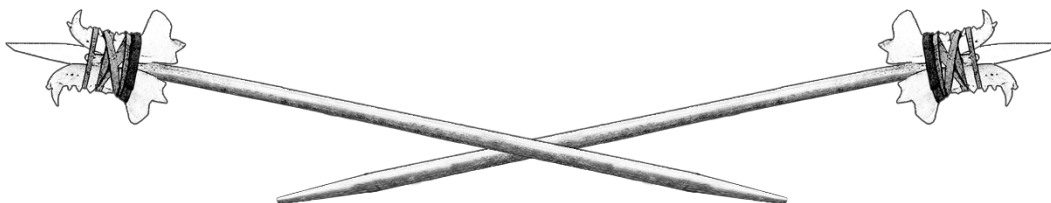
As the days grow shorter, a short severe wind from the Glowing Desert blows away the heavy Windflood clouds - Fruitbirth season has begun. Windflood's windy, temperate, humid days are suddenly replaced by Fruitbirth's hot, dry days until Fruitbirth ends at the Highest Sun solstice. Flowers blossom, and after a few weeks produce fruit. Fruitbirth clouds are much lighter and much higher in the sky than Windflood clouds, with the sky ranging from orange to pink. Light ground winds blow in from the Sea of Silt, but the clouds move swiftly across the sky in the opposite direction, blown by high altitude winds from the west. Almost every year, there is at least one brief midday shower in the late season that is uncomfortably hot, when the water steams and evaporates almost the instant that it hits the ground. Some even claim to have encountered boiling rains.

Every few days, a strong dry wind blows in from the Glowing Desert, accompanied by severe thunderstorms. These storms provoke mekillot herds, sometimes numbering over a thousand, to stampede across the plains, shaking the ground and trampling anything that does not move fast enough from the slow, thundering mekillots. Other herds are often scattered in the attempt to get out of the way, and herder clans take advantage of the opportunity to replenish their herds. Wezers also take advantage,

seeking creatures of large size and smaller as hosts to gestate their young. The wezers usually go after herd animals in the scrub plains, paralyzing them and bringing them back to their hives in sandy wastes and stony barrens. Rare rocs also sometimes hunt in the plains during Fruitbirth.

Towards the end of Fruitbirth, a few kreen clutches make hunting expeditions into the Trembling Plains. Neshtap hunting parties from Eldaarich enter the Trembling Plains through South Guard to stalk wild mekillot and other game, seeking to obtain bones for the craft villagers to work with and then returning to their own lands. These Neshtap hunting parties generally leave other humanoids alone, except for aarakocra and those who befriend them. Part of the Red Guards' mission is to watch for an early appearance of the "kreen". After the last Ral's Feast of the season, all elven tribes – other than the Sons of the Free – depart the plains. Some travel north of Kurn to unknown lands, while others depart south and west towards the Ringing Mountains, and then south to Urik through a notoriously hot stretch of stony barrens known as the Sun's Fist.

Draji templar-led reaver parties often travel to the far western reaches of the Trembling Plains during Fruitbirth season to capture korinth for military use or, failing that, to purchase korinth from the Big Lizard clan of plains giants, who herd the enormous reptiles. Belgoi likewise emerge from the badlands to hunt the Draji hunters.



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# Chapter Five: Settlements of the Trembling Plains

Azeth's Rest is the only permanent settlement that exists within the Trembling Plains that is inhabited year-round. Fort Stench is a permanent settlement, but actually shuts down and vacates for Flamesky season each year. South Guard and Silt Side sit on the very edge of the Trembling Plains, but are considered part of the Dim Lands of Eldaarich. Kurn, Fort Mudwatch, Storm Peak, and Winter Nest all sit several miles outside the Trembling Plains, but each both affects and is affected by the life and politics in the Trembling Plains, and they are therefore discussed herein.

## Azeth's Rest

*"For all of the lands I've seen  
that howl, burn, or tremble,  
To see the banners shimmer  
Above Azeth's oasis  
Showed to me the true meaning  
of respite and reflection."  
- Injala, bard of the spoken word*



The fortified oasis and trade village of Azeth's Rest lies on the trade road, which reaches north from Draj to Kurn. The road itself is generally in good condition, but south of Fort Ral it becomes treacherous, built on the tops of narrow lanes between silt pans and washes. Many traders have lost animals and men to slides off the road and down into the surprisingly deep silt.

The oasis of Azeth's Rest has remained in the hands of House Azeth ever since the trade village was founded, in the 162nd King's Age, shortly after Keltis founded Kurn more than 2,000 years ago. While Azeth is only considered a minor merchant house when compared to the great merchant houses of the Tyr Region, sending few caravans into the Tablelands and conducting little trade there, House Azeth dominates life in the Trembling Plains Region and functions as a major merchant house there.

Two shimmercloth flags fly above the gate. One flag displays the emblem of Azeth's Rest: a palm tree between four stones. The other flag displays the Azeth House emblem: a golden lizard with the torso and upper body of a man, standing between two palm trees. Travelers from the Tablelands are likely to have

never seen shimmercloth before. The cloth causes the colors of the flags to look dazzling in sunlight, and appear hauntingly beautiful in moonlight. The flags are masterworks of art crafted by Huzbug Azeth himself, and likely worth thousands of ceramic pieces each.

**Denizens:** During most of the year, Azeth's Rest is home to fewer than 850 people: mostly members of the Azeth family, slaves, as well as friends of Azeth and their families. This population is 48% half-elven, 35% human, 12% baazrag, and 5% assorted other races.

**Defenses:** 50 tough mercenaries, both Kurnan and Drylander, protect the village and the nearby road, manning the ballistae and fixed crossbows atop the great walls. Azeth's family compound is built atop a hill with abutting warehouses that are large enough to fit Azeth's mekillot ram and all of its argosies and wagons, thanks to the warehouses being dug deep into the hill. The compound is heavily guarded by loyal, lifelong Azeth agents. The oasis itself is protected by Azeth's Rest's baazrag population, which would also come out to fight if the oasis were attacked.

House Azeth maintains quarters for the 70 elite guards that defend the compound's property and the 90 slaves



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who handle the cargo and the animals. A dozen or more traders from House Azeth, led by Huzbug Azeth (Male Elf Bard 8 / Dune Trader 2, LG), manage the fort for most of the year. Most of the slaves are from the Tablelands, but many of the troops are Kurnan. When the Great Caravan is in Azeth's rest, the number of defenders rises considerably. Just before Flamesky season begins, Corik Azeth (Male Human Bard 5 / Dune Trader 5, LN) arrives with the Great Caravan and assumes command of Azeth's Rest's defenses, bringing a hundred Kurnan mercenaries to help protect the oasis from the "kreen." During such times, Huzbug continues to administrate routine community matters from his small mansion, while Corik takes his own place on the hill.

**Settlement:** Once each season, when the Great Caravan arrives back in Azeth's Rest, a seasonal trade fair begins and the village's population doubles, with additional elves, thri-kreen, and assorted members of more exotic races (such as plains giants, nikaal, and tareks) coming to camp outside the gates.

During the Flamesky season, no one camps outside Azeth's gates for fear of the rampaging trin, and over 4,000 Eloy herders pitch their tents wherever there is space within. Pens in Azeth's Rest are filled to capacity during this season.

No kreen or halflings have permanent residence within Azeth's walls, and any who visit are viewed with the same suspicion that other settlements might give to a belgoi or a braxat that sought refuge within its walls. Corik Azeth has ordered that La'tik'tik kreen, and individual kreen or halflings that come accompanied by other trustworthy individuals, be allowed to enter Azeth's Rest to trade, but the guards are sullen about obeying such orders.

Azeth's Rest is the long-standing home of a large clan of baazrags - nearly 100. The lumbering, thick-furred humanoids are often one of the most striking sights in the oasis for Drylander visitors, as large baazrag clans tend not to live in Tablelands settlements. The baazrags serve as outrunners and scouts for Azeth's caravans in the Forgotten North, protecting the caravans' flanks in hostile territory. In Azeth's Rest, the baazrags fulfill a similar function, supporting Azeth guards should the oasis come under attack. When not serving as guards, the baazrags are docile if undisturbed; most of them will completely ignore any visitors. They tend to only speak their baazrag tongue and to only interact with agents of House Azeth. The baazrag clan here is closely related with many of the baazrags that live in Kurn.

House Azeth's buildings are made of mud brick, squat and low with wide doors to accommodate load-bearing animals such as kanks. Mekillots must be unloaded outside the warehouses. Most of the buildings are designed as solid squares with flat roofs, often with unmortared mud bricks. The Azeth offices, barracks, stables, granary, storerooms, and other structures follow this pattern. In sharp contrast, a pair of elegant 50-foot-tall narrow white towers rise from within the fort.

### **Key to Azeth's Rest**

**1. Gate.** The gate is located between two towers that rise five feet above the walls. A heavy wooden portcullis studded with varnished thorns and barbs secures the gate. In times of attack, a heavy canvas is spread over the interior surface of the portcullis and splashed with a quick-hardening resin to provide a solid gate. Three fixed crossbows are mounted on the top of each tower beside the gate. The posts are always manned, and a bamboo awning provides shade for the guards. If a visitor displays an Azeth trust token, then everyone they vouch for can also enter Azeth's Rest; however, that individual is then held responsible if any person that they vouched for harms anyone or otherwise violates House Azeth's hospitality. The guards will also tell the individual displaying the token that the coin entitles them and their friends a free meal at the Drik's Belly Inn, and one free stop at the watering hole.

Without the trust token, each person must pay a silver piece in order to enter Azeth's Rest. If visitors seem hesitant to pay, the guards will consider other exchanges, particularly if the visitors have and are willing to part with trained kanks.

**2. Walls and Perimeter Path.** The 40-foot-tall outer walls have the exact same color as the brownish yellow sand beneath. The walls appear to be made from one single seamless piece of stone, 6 feet thick at the top, but sloped slightly inward. Each tower set within the irregular walls gives cover to a ballista, and grants access to the flat top of the wall and the fixed crossbows mounted at intervals along it. Inside the fort proper, a well-worn 20-foot wide path in the dirt runs parallel to the walls. It is forbidden for anyone but Azeth's mercenary troops and the elite guard to make use of this path, even during the crowded Flamesky season, ensuring swift and unobstructed access to the walls' towers in case of attack.

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**3. Caravan Path.** Normally taken over by the Azeth Market (or Eloy tents, during Flamesky season), this path turns into House Azeth's parking spot for its own mekillot ram, argosies, and wagons when the Great Caravan visits. A mekillot-pulled vehicle entering Azeth's Rest goes around this path counter-clockwise, until it parks in one of four designated positions along its length. The handlers then detach the mekillots and bring them to the nearby loading pillars. Visiting merchant houses, on the other hand, must leave such vehicles outside the fort's walls but are allowed to bring their mekillots inside.

**4. Loading Pillars.** These pillars allow Azeth to keep mekillots watered and safely under control while slaves unload Azeth freight to be taken into the warehouse. For non-Azeth mekillots, slaves will fill the drinking troughs for a price.

**5. Azeth Pens.** House Azeth keeps its livestock in these pens. The pens are often empty since Azeth purchases its livestock from the herders, and either slaughters them locally for food or transports the livestock to Ket or Draj in their trade caravans.

**6. Slave Quarters.** A windowless two-story adobe building stands at the center of the Caravan Path as one enters the gate. Despite their grim outward appearance, the slave quarters are surprisingly roomy and clean, and there is an open courtyard at the center of the building. Many of the slaves have families and children here with them. Like the Eloy herders and Kurnans, House Azeth actually accords slaves greater status than seasonal hirelings. More than fifty slaves and their families live in this building; the thirty most trusted slaves have their quarters in the lower tier of the Azeth family compound.

**7. The Azeth Market.** Azeth sells its own goods here, but when there is room, it allows others to put their stalls here as well.

**8. Huzbug Azeth's Quarters.** While most of the Azeth family members have their quarters in the southeast corner of Azeth's Rest, Huzbug Azeth keeps his quarters and offices right next to the drinking hole. He spends long hours here negotiating with herder chiefs and trade house representatives, and has guest quarters for them. Like other Azeth buildings, the mansion is considerably nicer on the inside than on the outside; a natural spring bubbles up right inside the courtyard.

**9. Drinking Hole.** Zaal trees and some spindly bushes grow around the drinking hole, and a number of green-leafed mo'onis trees grow in the thin shade

alongside Huzbug Azeth's mansion. Stones and resin form a two-foot wall around the hole, and the water level rises above the ground. If travelers display an Azeth trust token, this entitles them to one free use of the watering hole for up to eleven persons and their mounts. Without the trust token, water costs 3 silver pieces per tun (250 gallons).

**10. Oasis.** The area north of the drinking hole is thick with trees and bamboo, and the ground grows damp. The tree thicket is off-limits to guests and strangers except for those accompanied by Azeth family members or friends of Azeth. Azeth baazrags make their nests in the thicket, and vigilantly enforce the rule against unwelcomed persons who stray into the thicket. Khraazgudh (Male Baazrag Druid 7 / Grove master 1, N), watches over this grove. Four ancient and weather-beaten upright stone slabs can be found at the edges of the oasis, each one aligned to north, south, east, and west.

**11. Baazrag Nests.** These nine nest sites are home to the nearly 100 baazrags serving House Azeth. Baazrags build their nests out of available local materials, typically adobe, and here they have made use of the oasis' fast growing bamboo to erect exceptionally sturdy wicker domes woven in crude but effective patterns. Home to a family of up to twelve individuals, a dome protects the baazrags while they sleep; each also hides a tunnel to an underground warren where they store supplies and guard their young.

**12. The Drik's Belly Inn.** One of the largest buildings in Azeth's Rest, this three-story adobe inn is also one of the longest-standing establishments in the settlement. The somewhat eclectic shape of the building speaks to its storied past, with multiple phases of expansion and renovation obvious in its construction. Regardless of the season, patrons can always be found whiling away the hours here, with the small covered courtyard a favored gathering place for charot smokers, as they are not tolerated inside. The first floor is devoted to a kitchen and dining hall, complete with a long bar. At one end of the bar the innkeeper - Baldrick Thunderkeg, a boisterous Kurnan dwarf and rumored lover of Karinda, owner of the Five Seasons Inn - guards the stairs up to the dormitories and private rooms of the inn, with another flight dropping down into the cellar behind him. Though not particularly large, many of the private rooms are quite lavish; there is even a single "noble's suite" on this floor. Baldrick keeps at least one highly trusted guard posted here at all times. The top floor consists of dormitories, most composed of a simple common

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room with clean, comfortable hammocks and floor space, though two of the dormitories have proper bunks - each with a total of 12 beds. The top floor is regularly patrolled by the guard posted to the middle floor, except during Flamesky, when both floors have their own posted guards. Baldrick will sometimes put up covers and rent out space on the roof when demand is high - most frequently for the teeming crowds of Flamesky - but also for the rare aarakocran guest. The kitchen's fare and drinks are seasonal, with the exception of the eponymous "Drikbelly Broy," which is available year-round and brewed in the cellars of the inn.

**13. Crodlu Stables.** These stables are technically the stables for the Dirk's Belly Inn, but they have been operating as an independent livery for crodlu for some time now. The stables are managed by Rervir, a human in his sixth year of slavery to Baldrick, owner of the adjoining inn. Baldrick gives Rervir complete autonomy in how the stables are run, leading Rervir to create a thriving business that includes stabling for all crodlu in Azeth's Rest (not just those of the inn's patrons), mount replacement services for travelers in a hurry who need a fresh mount, and a small side business selling crodlu eggs. Rervir hopes to be invited to join Baldrick's family when his period of servitude is over, especially since he is in love with Baldrick's daughter Kathma.

**14. Shops and Apartments.** Negotiated through the manager of the Drik's Belly Inn, Azeth leases out these buildings from season to season. Leasing sales, storage, or crafting space without accompanying apartment space within Azeth's Rest does not give one the right to spend the night there, however, as House Tsalaxa rudely discovered. Azeth does not believe that competition constitutes a breach of trust; it allows the Dedys Consortium to sell its goods from the larger southernmost building in this area. However, if Azeth feels that the renter's sales are cutting into Azeth's own profits, it will raise the price of the next season's lease appropriately. It is not at all uncommon for two persons renting identical buildings to discover that one of them is paying ten times the rent that the other is paying. If Azeth wants someone to stay in town, they will lease them space for practically nothing.

**15. West Wind Market.** For five bits a day, anyone may set up a 5-foot by 5-foot stall to sell goods here. Those who have permission to stay in Azeth's Rest overnight may continue their sales during the night, so long as they do so reasonably quietly. Most nights see no business here and most days feature no more than a

dozen motley stalls, but during the trade fairs, this area is crowded with stalls selling a wide variety of goods.

**16. Tent Area.** For a silver piece, anyone allowed to enter Azeth's Rest receives a tent token (different from an Azeth trust token) allowing them to pitch a tent (up to 20-foot square) in any of Azeth Rest's outer perimeter areas, so long as they are more than five feet away from a building and stay out of the animal areas such as areas 5, 13, and 17. A token is good for the rest of the season. During Flamesky, the price rises to five silver pieces. Azeth usually gets paid in cattle rather than silver, and the house is willing to contemplate other profitable exchanges. Many of the tents in this area double as both quarters and vendor booths. Almost every herder has something to sell - cattle, if nothing else. Cattle prices are considerably lower during Flamesky than in other seasons.

**17. Cattle Pens.** These pen areas are for cattle. Anyone can leave their animals here (other than driks or mekillots which are secured in area 4). The fee is modest during most of the year but rises considerably during Flamesky season.

**18. Mercenary Barracks.** Centrally positioned for rapid response, this 30 by 50-foot two-story adobe building houses the majority of House Azeth's mercenary garrison. Each floor is plainly adorned, with spartan furnishings and pairs of hammocks slung every 5 feet. The roof and second floor are both accessible only by ladder, effectively serving as a watchtower - perfect for watching over the teeming crowds during Flamesky. The barracks can comfortably house 80 mercenaries, and often houses considerably more than that during Flamesky season.

**19. Maker Tower.** Ausar Maker (Male Human Wizard (Preserver) 5 / Kurnan Maker 5, NG) and his wife Gelnal Maker (Female Human Bard 2 / Wilder 7 / Spymaster 4, TN) live here (see *FFN* for more details). Ausar is considered a friend of Azeth, and personally helped to make the walls of Azeth's Rest. The previous walls were made of adobe mud like most of the rest of the village and therefore much shorter, and there were casualties every year from the trin raids. Since the construction of the current walls, not a single person within them has died. Ausar is considered something of a local hero.

**20. Shrine of the Desert Breeze.** Administered by Biraan Azeth (Female Human Cleric (Air) 7, CN), this open-air place of worship is open to any visitor. A set of stairs leads to a stone platform and altar at the level of the treetops. A large wicker cage stands at the

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bottom of the staircase, containing about 25 songbirds. For 2 ceramic pieces, Biraan will sell any person a songbird for “sacrifice.” To Biraan, it goes without saying that one “sacrifices” a songbird by standing at the altar and setting it free. The birds are actually trained to fly away from Azeth’s Rest and to return to their nesting place, from which Biraan later recovers them to sell to other strangers. This is not impiety on Biraan’s part: setting the birds free is a ritual that honors the elements, the details are not important. As far as Biraan is concerned, all persons have reason to be grateful to the winds, particularly if they travel through the Trembling Plains; she does not care if they have other beliefs or spiritual allegiances.

Biraan will look more kindly on persons who show the winds proper respect (by offering a sacrifice for one’s safe arrival in Azeth’s Rest), *before* trying to strike any other conversation with her, or trying to negotiate for her services. She will give such persons a 10% discount on any of her priestly services unless they otherwise show themselves unworthy of her favor. For others, she sells spellcasting services at the normal rate, but she does not keep any confidences secret from her House Azeth brethren.

**21. The Five Seasons Inn.** A misnomer if ever there was one, the ‘Five Seasons Inn’ is open only during the season of Flamesky, and even then it doesn’t offer lodgings. The owner, a female mul named Karinda, is an expert brewer and distiller. Between Coldnights and Fruitbirth, she gathers kank honey, berries, fruits, and botanicals, and creates a wide variety of alcoholic beverages. She also sells the occasional cask from her cellar to merchants passing through Azeth’s Rest during this time. During Flamesky, however, she opens for business, setting up a bar out the front of the inn and catering to the refugees that flood into the fort to avoid the swarming trin.

**22. Potter’s Corner.** A few apartments of separate potter families live and sell their wares from these rented apartments. They get their source materials from clay pits they have dug that are within walking distance of Azeth’s Rest.

**23. Azeth Kiln.** Azeth family members own this kiln and they occasionally operate it to create trust and tent tokens, as well as minting House Azeth ceramic pieces, which are often used in Kurn as well as in Azeth’s Rest. Most of the time, various potters operate the kiln, paying the owners for its use.

**24. Armorer.** Horak, a Kurnan expatriate (Male Human Expert 4, LN) fashions quality armor here. He

imports his leather from Kurn (+20% to cost) but sells reasonable quality armor made from trin chitin for only 75% of the normal cost. He is competent but overworked, and rarely produces armor of exceptional quality. He will do custom work armor for typical prices, but will not rush his work or push his other work behind, taking an entire season (75 days) to deliver. Horak has no last name since he left the Armorer’s Clave over a disagreement that he refuses to speak about. He has great respect for Oronis but, as a Kurnan without a clave, he feels alienated in his own land.

**25. Elite Guard’s Quarters.** One of the more elegant structures among the common adobes of Azeth’s Rest, this building (and the adjoining officers’ homes) houses professional troops from Kurn. The main quarters sport a sloped roof and contain a bunkhouse, kitchen, and mess hall; the quarters themselves are well-apportioned, with wooden bunks and other modest, but comfortable furnishings. At least one of the officers’ houses is typically unoccupied except during Flamesky, and is often lent out to trusted Azeth contacts.

**26. Azeth Tower.** Kaidan Azeth (Male Half-elf Wizard (Preserver) 7, CG) and Leisahn Azeth (Female Half-elf Wizard (Preserver) 9, NG) work and occasionally sleep in this tower, though they have quarters in the upper tier of the Azeth compound with their children and grandchildren. This husband and wife are House Azeth’s most powerful preservers, other than mercenaries. They often accompany House Azeth caravans to Drajan and back, but rarely together.

**Azeth Compound.** The Azeth compound is built atop a small hill set in the corner of Azeth’s Rest.

**27. Gatehouse to Lower Tier of Azeth Compound.** This gatehouse guards the only entry to the private Azeth compound (except for the door leading through the warehouse). At least two guards always man this gatehouse.

**28. Azeth Compound, Lower Tier.** The lower tier of the compound contains housing for junior Azeth agents and the fort’s most trusted slaves, and is located at the bottom of the hill.

**29. Azeth Warehouses.** This portion of the Azeth compound is the secured storage space for valuable Azeth cargo waiting to be shipped north to Kurn or south to the Tyr Region. Strong locks and round-the-clock guards, not to mention the sheer bulk of the trade goods, make robbery of this facility difficult and dangerous. The warehouses’ floor space is larger than

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the buildings' exteriors would suggest, as the warehouses extend significantly into the hill itself.

**30. Gate to the Upper Tier of Azeth Compound.** This gate separates the Azeth warehouses from the upper tier of the Azeth compound. The gate is always manned by at least one guard.

**31. Azeth Compound, Upper Tier.** Higher on the hill dwell Azeth's senior agents and their families. The doors to all of these homes face the Tree of Life. The only entrance to the upper tier of the Azeth compound is through area 30.

**32. Tree of Life.** This giant sequoia was planted by Meraan Azeth, two thousand years ago. Stretching some two hundred and fifty feet into the sky, and with a trunk some twenty-five feet in diameter, the tree is a well known landmark in Azeth's Rest and can be spotted from miles away.

**33. Chapel of the Ancient Seas.** The oldest building in Azeth's Rest. A false adobe mud front covers the ancient stone vault. Its dome is translucent, crafted of an unknown material, and contains the ancient, but still-living body of Meraan Azeth. House Azeth does not tell the name of this temple to strangers, or discuss its contents.

### **Economy and Trade**

Azeth profits reasonably well from its sales of food, water, lodging to travelers within Azeth's Rest, and its sale of freight space within the Azeth Great Caravan, but it makes the bulk of its money from its own direct trade with Kurn, Eldaarich, Draj, and the denizens and travelers of the Trembling Plains.

Azeth deals in animals, dung, and charcoal fuel from the herders of the Trembling Plains, obsidian from Charvass, hemp from Draj, grain from Ket, spell components from elves, fruit, medicine, armor, weapons, and tools from Kurn, and jade, gold, silver, and copper from Eldaarich. The Merchant House controls trade with the Dim Lands, through High Templar Kerillis at Silt Side, but Azeth does not enter farther into the Dim Lands. Azeth is also the most trusted trade house in the Trembling Plains, since it has proven itself worthy of trust and shares much of the locals' culture and interests, such as their relentless campaign against bandits and defilers. Kurnans particularly trust Azeth because ancestors of the same people who became Kurnans also founded House Azeth.

The traders of House Azeth permit caravans of other merchant houses and itinerant dune traders to visit Azeth's Rest to purchase water. They charge heavily for the water, however, and even charge for the privilege of camping within sight of the walls. Only members of House Azeth or those showing a special token are permitted to stay overnight within the fort's walls - these guests can often secure lodging in the Drik's Belly Inn (except during Flamesky).

Dune traders flock to Azeth's Rest for Azeth's four yearly fairs. Elf tribes, Draj merchants, and Trenbull Al'Raam'ke and the Moratuc also visit the oasis regularly. During trade fairs, the variety of goods for sale is as good as in a typical city-state; only someone from Nibenay is accustomed to a better variety. During other times, variety, quality, and quantity of goods is as undependable as in any other typical Athasian town.

### **Arcane Magic in Azeth's Rest**

A number of Azeth family members openly practice preserver magic, most notably Kaidan and Leisahn Azeth. Some of these - including "Friend of Azeth" Ausar Maker and his wife Gelna - dwell in one of the two tall, white towers such as those that are popular among the Maker's Clave in Kurn. A child usually stands guard on the balcony of one of these towers, watching over the oasis for those who would attempt to defile it. Raised by preserving magic, there is an obvious contrast between the unnaturally tall monolithic stone structures built by hired Kurnan wizards (the two towers and the village walls), and the mud-adobe buildings that the rest of the village is built from.

Like the Kurnans and most others living around the Trembling Plains, House Azeth understands the difference between preserving and defiling magic, and is welcoming to preservers. However, House Azeth does not tolerate defilers (see the Laws and Enforcement section below for more details).

### **Secrets of the Azeth's Rest Oasis**

Known to only a few Azeth family members, the spring at Azeth's Rest is not a natural spring, but the product of a *create oasis* spell cast by House Azeth's founder, Meraan Azeth, shortly after Kurn was founded. Meraan, a Water cleric who had served Keltis in the Cleansing Wars, received permission from his general-turned-king to establish a trade route with the various communities and nomads of the lands south of

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Kurn. Trading with the fledgling city-state of Draj proved difficult, however, because of the vast distance between oases on the journey southwards. Eventually Meraan cast *create oasis* on what he calculated was the ideal spot for establishing a trade route between Kurn and Draj, but maintaining the oasis required him to remain in its limits, while his children led caravans north and south. The arrangement proved profitable, and herders, elves, and other nomads flocked to the new oasis-fort to trade. Entering old age, Meraan realized that House Azeth could not survive without an oasis at Azeth's Rest. Knowing that the oasis would dry up the instant that he died, Meraan sought for a means to prolong his life. He obtained an item known as a *dreamless helm* and now remains alive but in stasis in a stone vault on the hill. Meraan leaves stasis once a year for a single day, to enjoy a meal, discuss strategy with the heads of the house, and reconnect with his descendants. Aging only one day for every year that passes by, Meraan will nevertheless die of old age eventually, causing the village, and probably House Azeth, to wither away. Corik Azeth busily seeks alternatives to either keep Meraan in some type of stasis that does not cause him to age, or to otherwise make the oasis permanent. For House Azeth, this is a matter of life and death.

### **Black Market and Organized Crime**

Azeth's Rest is an honest community. It attracts and produces few criminals, because there are few laws to

break in the first place, and because Azeth strictly enforces the few laws it does have, as the predominant local cultures - those of Kurn and the Eloy - value predictability and trust. The closest thing that Azeth's Rest has to a hub of organized crime is Gelna Maker, a charming middle-aged Kurnan woman who lives with her husband, Ausar Maker, in the village's two towers (area 30). Gelna belongs to Kurn's School of Spies, and uses both her own status as unofficial village gossip and her husband's position of trust with House Azeth to keep her handlers apprised of any rumors or knowledge of important developments that pass through Azeth's Rest.

### **Laws and Enforcement**

Like their neighbors, House Azeth subscribes to the "Code of the Trembling Plains" (see Chapter 6: "The People of the Trembling Plains", for more information). Those who defraud others or break the peace must pay compensation to those they have harmed and vow not to cheat others or break the peace again in Azeth's Rest. Non-violent thieves and oathbreakers are branded and expelled from Azeth's Rest. Murderers, defilers, rapists, and bandits, whether they committed their crimes inside Azeth's Rest or without, are hanged outside the gate, although Corik may show mercy if someone that he knows and trusts intercedes and offers to take responsibility for the criminal. For defilers, intercession means accepting a seven-year apprenticeship to the interceding

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preserver; for murderers or bandits, this means accepting seven years of slavery to an interceding herder. In either case, the intercessor vows to take responsibility for the slave, and that if the slave reverts to his crime or attempts to escape before the seven years are up, the intercessor must pay restitution.

### **Economy and Trade**

Azeth profits reasonably well from its sales of food, water, lodging to travelers within Azeth's Rest, and its sale of freight space within the Azeth Great Caravan, but it makes the bulk of its money from its own direct trade with Kurn, Eldaarich, Draj, and the denizens and travelers of the Trembling Plains.

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### **Rumors in Azeth's Rest**

Those who spend time gossiping with persons at the Drik's Belly inn, at the water hole, or while purchasing goods, may learn the following rumors, based on their Gather Information check. If they are in Azeth's Rest during the trade fair or during the Flamesky season, they may meet up with other groups that have their own rumors (see *FFN* for more details).

#### **Gather Information**

**(DC 10)** Refugees from the Dim Lands look helpless, but many of them possess unarmed fighting tactics that would put them on par with a gladiator from the Tablelands. (**True** - Dim Lands refugees are often skilled at unarmed fighting and quite a few refugees from Eldaarich are soulknives.)

**(DC 14)** Unarmed fighting skills are part of the Eldaarish religion. (**True and False** - While Eldaarich's Haleban templars pretend that there is a single unifying "Eldaarish Religion," there are more cults in Eldaarich than in any other city on Athas. However, many of these cults do teach martial arts. Two of these cults once taught their followers to become soulknives.)

**(DC 16)** The Azeth wind priests have had ominous dreams lately, dreams about a bird carrying a newborn baby across the Sea of Silt. (**True** - See the adventure hook "Child of the Winds" in *FFN* for more details.)

**(DC 18)** That strange Eldaarish matriarch must be a persuasive priestess: several of her herders sport bandit tattoos and admit to having been former bandits, but say that they've changed their ways. (**Mostly True** - As a thrallherd, Pfastra Zkeet - see "Eloy" in *FFN* for more details - is certainly persuasive, and is a cult figure.)

**(DC 20)** Other than Fruitbirth season, when the mekillots shake the ground, the tremors in this land usually come from the ruin of Hogalay.

**(DC 22)** Long ago, Hogalay's Earth King captured a terrible fiend, which continues to shake the ground, trying to escape.

*"Yes, Charvass. The trade village of - what do they call themselves again? Moratuc, that's it! Anyway, the village is just like the Moratuc themselves: square, obsessively regimented, and almost completely opaque about what's really going on there under the surface."*

- Zhiljar, House M'ke envoy

Located on the eastern edge of the Charvass Peninsula, hard up against the Sea of Silt and just a stone's throw from the Road of Fire, Charvass is a tiny dwarven village housed within the base of a mountain. Until recently, these isolated dwarves scratched out a subsistence-level living on the slopes of the mountain, but the arrival of House M'ke has changed the village's focus to obsidian mining and trade.

Over 2,500 years ago, a detachment of dwarves were sent from Hoyalay to reinforce the small dwarven town of Charvass against an attack by the army of Egendero of Carsys, the Dwarf Butcher. By the time they arrived, however, the town had fallen, filled with molten lava redirected by the Champion's magic. The detachment attempted to return to Hoyalay, only to find the city surrounded and under siege by the Butcher's army, with no way through the enemy lines. With the dwarven cities to the south in ruins and the way north cut off, the dwarven commander returned his unit to Charvass. Once there, it was decided the dwarves would attempt to hide from the Butcher's army and rebuild in isolation.

Nearly 80 years of isolated peace came to an end when a second Cleansing army, this time led by Borys, found the group. The dwarves hide their children deep in one of the abandoned mines with the oldest dwarf, Moratuc, as a minder. Weeks later, forced out of hiding by the lack of supplies, Moratuc returned to the surface to find the other dwarves dead and the Butcher's army gone. He attempted to rebuild again but died only a few short years later. The children remained, growing up in isolation and convinced that the outside world held only death. They took the name Moratuc as their own and forged a new path for themselves.

The Moratuc, as they call themselves, were rediscovered only recently (F.Y. -6) by Marcus Allraamke as he sought to open new trade routes with the giantish inhabitants of the Road of Fire. Marcus's son Trenbull was able to take the first real steps toward breaking their isolation by integrating their beliefs

with his own, teaching the Moratuc to mine obsidian, and opening a small trade post.

The true village of Charvass is hidden deep in the mountain caves. At one time the village was a series of barracks for the old city's guards. It was one of the few parts of the city that were spared from the magma and later became the core of the new settlement. Outsiders typically never learn of the true village, as an exterior trade village (located on the surface) is used when dealing with outsiders. The Moratuc miners and warriors, a priest, Trenbull, and his apprentice typically spend a few days each month in this trade village before returning to the hidden village.

## Key to Charvass - Trade Village

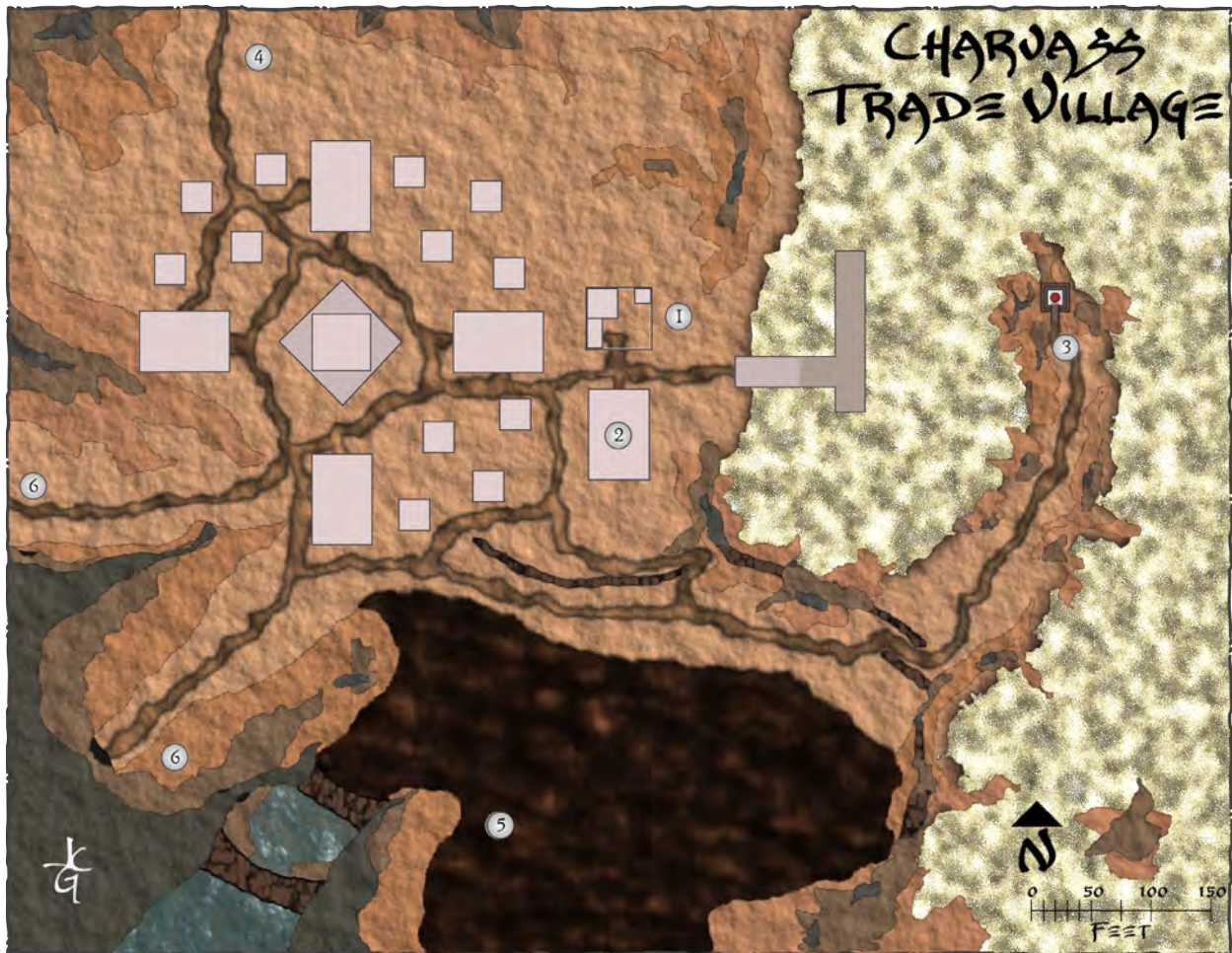
A dozen small (twenty-five square feet) block homes stand among four larger stone buildings in this tiny village, all arranged in a rough circle. The block houses look badly in need of repair, and are filled with dwarf-sized beds, chests, and tables. The larger buildings are used for temporary storage, work rooms, a kitchen (with well), and communal dining/gathering area for use in bad weather. Few outsiders ever learn this village is not the full extent of Charvass. Except for days when silt skimmers are scheduled to arrive, the surface village is usually empty except for a single guard and possibly a few dwarves working in the crafting areas to mend farming implements.

1) Trade House - This small building hosts Trenbull's office, a sleeping area, a records room, a reception area, and a latrine. Trenbull and his apprentice are rarely present unless there is a silt skimmer scheduled to arrive.

2) Warehouse - This building is filled with obsidian, giant hair, sacks of faro flour, and other goods ready to be taken away by a silt skimmer or giant, or to be moved to the hidden village's storerooms.

3) Silt Skimmer Signal Fire - A large fire that can be seen from the Silt Sea is kept here, ready to be used as a beacon. It is only lit when a silt skimmer is scheduled to arrive.

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4) Path to Azeth's Rest - The Moratuc take obsidian and giant hair to Azeth's Rest in handcarts for trade and return with livestock and trade goods.

5) Farmland - The Moratuc traditionally had a limited diet, but their new trade opportunities have given them access to additional sources of meat and bone tools, allowing them to grow the same amount of food with far less effort. Small fields are located here, protected from the worst of the blown silt by ruined walls. The Moratuc grow bamboo, faro cacti, neep, and siltweed, as well as collecting foodstuffs from the silt shallows (fishing for young silt spawn and silt-dwelling "shellfish")

6) Mine/Ruin Entrances - These tunnels lead to the old mines and ruined portions of Charvass, still filled with hardened lava. Several of these tunnels grant access to obsidian deposits, which are mined by the Moratuc both for their own use and for trade.

### Key to Charvass - (Underground) Hidden Village

**1) Family Quarters (12)** - Former barracks, these rooms have been carved directly out of the mountain's stone. Each is roughly fifteen feet by forty feet across, and contains a reception area, storage area, family room, and sleeping areas. Each of these is occupied by a separate family.

**2) Spare Quarters (12)** - Former barracks that are not currently occupied. Most are used as additional storage for weapons, tools, food, and other items.

**3) Well (1)** - A deep well that was once also used by the original settlement.

**4) Communal (3)** - Originally briefing and dining halls, and a kitchen, these large (fifty by one hundred-foot) areas are now filled with trinkets, art, tables, benches, and other miscellaneous items.

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**5) Guard Room (1)** - This room still serves its original purpose, acting as a guard room for the hidden village.

**6) Latrines (6)** - The waste from this area is used to fertilize the village's mushroom field.

**7) Mushroom Field (1)** - Originally a training area, this large (fifty by one hundred-foot) chamber has been turned into a mushroom field by generations of composting. Thick doors and ventilation shafts are the only things keeping the smell from invading the rest of the complex.

**8) Nursery and Elders' Rooms (2)** - These rooms were originally quarters for the guard contingent's commander, but were repurposed into day areas for the oldest and youngest of the village. The nursery is filled with various toys and child sized furniture, while the elders' room is reserved for those at least 200 years old.

### **Organization**

The Moratuc organize themselves along family lines. Very few female children were alive during the attack that orphaned them, leading to dwarven women becoming extremely important to the Moratuc. Today, each family is led by a female dwarf. When a female has a child of her own, she moves into one of the unoccupied barracks and starts her own family. Male children - even adults - always live under their mother's roof, unless they are currently favored by one of the family heads. Being so young when their caretaker died, marriage was never introduced to the Moratuc, so a male only moves in with a family head while he is favored by her. When a couple no longer wishes to continue their relationship, the male moves back in with his mother. It is unusual for a female to have more than one favored male at any one time and couples produce children infrequently, so tracking fatherhood is relatively easy. The family heads are responsible for all intra-family issues, while a council of elders (made up of dwarves over the age of 200 years) decide things for the village as a whole. In a unique turn of events, Trebull has been chosen to lead the council instead of the oldest Moratuc - as he has far more experience with the outside world - and has been empowered to make all external decisions without the council's approval.

The Moratuc also organize themselves by roles. Everyone is expected to contribute to the village's defense, and martial skills are taught to every child. Dedicated warriors do exist, however, in addition to hunters, farmers, and a small priesthood. With the

changes instituted by Trenbull five years earlier, many of the farmers have instead taken up mining, creating a fifth group. Trenbull's Moratuc apprentice is a new addition and could become the nucleus of a new dedicated group if trade with the outside world continues; this traders group might even expand to include some of the warriors and hunters.

### **External Relations**

The Moratuc have very little interaction with outsiders, most of which is confined to trade with House M'ke, House Azeth, and the giants of the Road of Fire.

**House M'ke:** House M'ke's presence in the village is limited to Trenbull and the silt skimmers that come to deliver and pick up supplies. The Moratuc look highly upon House M'ke, seeing them as being responsible for the village's recent prosperity. The Moratuc still rarely speak to the silt sailors but are friendly when they do.

**House Azeth:** Much like House M'ke, House Azeth is also looked favorably upon by the Moratuc, but usually only by those who accompany the caravans to Azeth's Rest and back. The Moratuc typically do not interact much with Azeth agents, preferring their own company, but they are friendly when they do deal with them.

**Giants:** Before Trenbull came to Charvass, the Moratuc only left their hidden home to farm and hunt. Since the ruins have been repaired to facilitate trade, the local giants find it easier and more efficient to trade their hair and erdlus to the Moratuc than attempting to raid them for supplies. The giants have even been able to gain access to other items the Moratuc now trade for via House M'ke, such as bone tools. Unsurprisingly, approaching giants that are already known to the Moratuc are greeted as friends, while unknown giants are still viewed with suspicion.

**Dwarves:** The Moratuc do not see themselves as dwarves and are typically indifferent to them. Those that come with House M'ke to trade with the villagers can easily gain a friend, but few dwarves spend enough time in the village to consider any of the Moratuc a friend.

**Others:** The Moratuc haven't interacted with outsiders as a group in living memory. Even lone travelers were avoided, but with the opening of trade relations, the Moratuc are willing to entertain the idea of friendships. Those Moratuc who regularly interact

# CHABVASS HIDDEN VILLAGE



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with outsiders are far more prone to being well-disposed towards outsiders, while those who do not - such as some of the farmers - are still quite wary of outsiders. It's possible that the coming years will see a division in the Moratuc form between those that will willingly interact with outsiders and those that won't, but only time will tell. Kreen are especially looked upon with curiosity, as they are rarely seen, typically only one a year.

### **Residents**

Trade between the Moratuc and the outside world is handled by Trenbull "Uhrnius" AlRaam'ke (Male Human Ranger 12 / Dune Trader 5, NG). Trenbull is assisted by his apprentice Brodeth (Female Dwarf Expert 5 / Warrior 1, N), a Moratuc who is eager to learn the trader's way from him. The village's trading efforts are further supported by Rurgrick & Whustra (Male & Female Dwarf Commoner 2 / Expert 2 / Warrior 2), two farmers-turned-crafters who produce items for export when not making or repairing tools and other equipment the village needs to survive.

The Ash faith of the Moratuc is led by High Priest Arakhi (Female Dwarf Cleric 11, LG), a portly middle-aged dwarf woman with braided, prematurely gray hair. Arakhi is assisted by Welm (Male Dwarf Fighter 1 / Physic adept 4 / Tribal Psionicist 1, LG), who, despite not actually being cleric, has a deep and abiding faith in Ash, and is seen as a great source of wisdom among the villagers. Arakhi and Welm are assisted by two junior priests, Doram & Nawa (Male and Female Dwarf Expert 1 / Cleric 1 / Fighter 1), former farmers who only recently felt the calling of the element of "Ash".

Headman Therfom (Male Dwarf Commoner 10 / Fighter 1, LG) leads the village's now-reduced

contingent of farmers. Therfom was once a force to be reckoned with on the council of elders, but with the coming of House M'ke and the adoption of mining by many of the villager's farmers, he feels his voice on the council has been much diminished. The council of elders still deeply value Therfom's opinion, however, as he and his 15 remaining farmers (Male or Female Dwarf Commoner 1 / Warrior 1) are still vital to the village's survival.

Charvass' new group of miners are led by the strict and bellowing Foreman Tuldrolin (Male Dwarf Commoner 4 / Expert 2 / Fighter 2, LN), who oversees 25 miners (Male or Female Dwarf Commoner 1 / Warrior 1) and ensures that the obsidian is mined safely. Before the Moratuc began mining obsidian, Tuldrolin was the villager most often tasked with repairing crumbling stonework and keeping the village's underground passageways in good repair, so he was an obvious choice to oversee the new mining efforts.

Captain Ludra (Female Dwarf Fighter 4 / Ranger 3, LN) leads the Moratuc's warriors and hunters (Male or Female Dwarf Fighter 1), a group of 10 warriors who are either especially skilled at stalking prey or are otherwise ill-equipped for anything other than combat and guard duty. Ludra is the village's premier hunter and responsible for detecting and deflecting threats before they ever reach the village.

The village's population is rounded out by a number of non-combatants, made up largely of young children (Male or Female Dwarf Commoner 0) and elders (Male or Female Dwarf Commoner 10 / Warrior 2). In addition to serving on Charvass' council of elders, the village's oldest and most revered members are - as a nod to the original dwarf Moratuc - also responsible for watching and teaching the children while the parents are busy with the day's work.

## **Conak's Rock**

Built atop the granite escarpment that looms a hundred feet above the road to Kurn, Conak's Rock is first and foremost a military outpost, housing a garrison of approximately a hundred troops. While a single inn and a handful of traders can be found here, they exist primarily to service the Kurnan garrison.

Built in a 'D' shape, the bastion (often known simply as 'the Fort' or 'the Rock') has twenty-foot-high walls along the cliff edge, rising to thirty feet along the straight edge that faces down the slope of the

escarpment to the north. A pair of watchtowers rise a further ten feet above the curving walls, with an additional four thirty-foot-tall towers looming over the straight wall that faces to the northeast. Each of the towers has a large ballista mounted on its flat roof, and a stout wooden gate piercing the northeast wall is the only visible ingress or egress from the fort.

A circular keep rises fifty feet into the sky from a roughly triangular-shaped inner bailey located the center of the encampment. Ballistae stand arrayed

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around the keep's upper level, as well as the inner bailey's smaller towers. An enormous tree grows from within the central courtyard; although only forty feet tall, the tree's trunk is a full thirty feet in diameter. Incredibly ancient, this *tree of life* was planted here long ago by Keltis when he first resettled Kurn and fortified the Rock. Originally intended to be used by the garrison's defilers, it now serves to support the Kurnan templars and preservers stationed here.

Built all along the interior of the fort's walls are an assortment of buildings, including a barracks, smithy, general store, repair workshops, and warehouses. A solitary inn sits near the gate, primarily serving the garrison here, but also servicing the occasional traveler who stops here before continuing onto Kurn itself.

Prices for civilian patrons of the inn, smithy, or general store are generally 200% of normal.

Hidden beneath the Rock are a series of passages and chambers, hewn from the very granite itself. Besides containing supplies and water for an extended siege, this underground level serves as a last-ditch refuge for the Rock's garrison should the walls be breached. The underground redoubt also stores the garrison's secret weapon: a significant quantity of ranike sap, in both liquid and resin form. Hurlled over the walls when the trin mass, its smoke is quite effective at debilitating any insect horde that approaches, rendering them easy marks for the artillery, archers, and spellcasters of the garrison.

## Fort Meraan

House Azeth built Fort Meraan twenty-five King's Ages ago, on the ruins of the ancient goblin city of "False" Juhudhuzar (see Chapter Seven: "Dead Cities"). There were once silver mines here, but they ran out during the Green Age; enough salt remains to make its mining productive, and the mountain cisterns fill up sufficiently during Windflood season to provide

for the Eloy herds that shelter here in the underground ruins during Flamesky season. Most of the salt mining actually gets done by Eloy herders working to support their keep during Flamesky. Azeth agents consider Fort Meraan an unpopular assignment and Korik Azeth tries not to leave anyone there for longer than a year. With the Tablelands open for trade, Azeth no

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longer has such a pressing need for salt, but the Eloy have come to depend on the underground city as a place of refuge, so the fort helps maintain the Eloy's reliance on House Azeth and ensure the House's local dominance. Short-staffed since opening Silt Side for trade, House Azeth has reduced Fort Meraan's contingent to six Azeth guards, five slaves, a senior agent, and the contingent's families. Azeth has walled off all of the caves and built a gate of very manageable size, so this seems adequate. Some have suggested reducing the contingent even further, but the Fort Meraan post has a history of cabin fever. The loneliness and long isolation have led to dark incidents in the past, and members of smaller contingents tend to wear more quickly on each others' nerves.

Persons that visit Fort Meraan without an Azeth trust token cannot enter its narrow gate, but some House personnel will invariably look for any excuse to conduct a lengthy conversation through the gate; the personnel here are often quite sick of talking to each other and are desperate to talk to outsiders.

The Eloy refer to the outpost as "Goblin's End," which the local meorty does not find very amusing. The meorty, an undead Green Age goblin named Asherak, enforces some remnant of the rules that used to govern Juhudhuzar. Ironically, this meorty has actually saved the lives of many Azeth agents as they fell victim to cabin fever, interceding and stopping fights before

they turned deadly. If someone uses a pointed or edged weapon for any reason other than self-defense or the defense of another within Fort Meraan, Asherak will appear, charge the perpetrator with "knifing," and demand the payment of a fine. Unlike most other meorties, Asherak can speak any language and he is not picky about the face on the silver piece, as long as it is the proper weight and purity. If someone cannot afford to pay their fine, Asherak tells them that they must serve Juhudhuzar and attempts to teleport them back to his hideout so as to slay and reanimate them as deputy namechs.

Juhudhuzar's laws require a sixteen-silver piece fine for "unauthorized knifing of a visiting elf, dwarf, or goblin" and a two thousand silver piece fine for "unauthorized knifing of a citizen" (including the undead goblin citizens of Juhudhuzar such as Asherak and the other goblinoid undead that dwell in "True" Juhudhuzar). There is also a fine of nine coppers for "unauthorized knifing of a human or anything else." Asherak will happily accept a silver piece in lieu of nine coppers and will apologize graciously for his inability to give change - he ran out of copper pieces during the 168th King's Age. Under no circumstances will Asherak reveal that there is another, "True," Juhudhuzar. In all these years, no one has discovered the "True" city of Juhudhuzar, located only six miles north and high above Meraan in a hidden valley.

## **Fort Stench**

This fortified town, once known as "Tanner's Grove," is true to its newer name, exuding an odor that pains travelers as far as half a mile away. Tanning activities contribute considerably to Kurn's economy, and Kurn's work in leather and hides is unmatched anywhere in the known world, but the Kurnans nonetheless pressured their tanners to take their industry farther and farther from the city. Finally, the Tanners' Clave decided to found a town near the main trade road, so that herders could sell their animals to them year-round, without being subject to Kurn's harsh entry tax. The town has been destroyed and rebuilt twice, once by bandits and once by kreen, and the center of town contains a large mausoleum and memorial to the townspeople who died in those and other attacks. A few other claves, such as the Lime-Burners and the Furriers, have moved south to Fort Stench, some because their activities also involve strong smells or obnoxious smoke. Others, such as the Armorers and Cobblers Claves, keep a sizable

presence in Fort Stench because of the proximity to the trade road, and the opportunity to sell goods to the Eloy, who generally only visit Kurn once per year.

Fort Stench has developed a uniquely pragmatic approach to security during the trin raids of Flamesky. While Azeth's Rest protects itself with supernaturally high walls, and South Guard protects itself with hundreds of warriors, the inhabitants of Fort Stench simply pick up and move back to Kurn until the threat passes. Additionally, the well at Fort Stench runs low during Flamesky and runs completely dry during the first few weeks of Ral's Rest, leaving the residents little incentive to stay and defend the village. Like most Kurnan buildings, the buildings of Fort Stench each consist of a large 10-foot-deep stone-lined pit covered with a large tent-like white tarp. The various claves of the village simply take down their tarps, pack up their goods and belongings, seal the well, knock down various sections of the town walls, move a hill of sand



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## FORT STENCH

1. Corrals (2)
2. Gate
3. Sellers Clave Tent
4. Governor's Palace
5. Black Brotherhood Tent
6. Green Brotherhood Tent
7. Earth Shrine
8. Herders Clavehouse
9. Abattoir
10. Drying Stalls
11. Tanning Pits
12. Tanners/Furriers Work Tent
13. Armorers Work Tent
14. Mausoleum
15. Warehouses (2)
16. The Trembling Passage (Inn)
17. Well
18. The Terrible Truth (Inn)



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Kurn. They make good use of Flamesky and Ral's Rest seasons, doing whatever business they need to do in Kurn. When the inhabitants return to Fort Stench in Coldnights, it only takes a day to mount the walls back in place and re-mortar them together. They then unseal their well, sweep out their buildings, hoist the tarps, clean out the mausoleum, and the town quickly goes on with their business as if nothing had happened.

When disputes or crimes involve "Drylanders" (the Kurnan word for persons from the Tablelands or the Glowing Desert) or "Dimlanders" (the Kurnan word for persons from the Dim Lands - Eldaarich and surrounding territories), the governor of Fort Stench, Lhonia Grey, has full authority. Governors are not chosen by the claves or the people, but appointed by Oronis; governors handle tax issues, dealings with the outside world, and act as a liaison between the elected government and the Kurnan army. In other matters, the people govern themselves. The claves of Fort Stench each choose their own captains, quartermasters, and speakers. Clave speakers arbitrate disputes between claves when they can, and tribunes and magistrates from Kurn visit the community on a monthly basis to resolve any disputes that the clave leaders can not manage on their own. Clave speakers from Fort Stench also participate in the yearly Tribune elections in Kurn.

Commander Heru Black (Male Human Fighter 12, LN) is the chief military officer of the Black Brotherhood at Fort Stench, and reports to superiors in Conak's Rock. Heru's regular staff consists merely of two lieutenants, but he has authority to call the local militia into service, meaning up to every able-bodied adult in Fort Stench. Heru spends most of his time training with the militia. All Kurnans, particularly in outlands towns such as Fort Stench, spend nearly 100 days out of every year, (two days out of every month, plus one full season of every year) training with the militia. Savage and merciless enemies surround Kurn from all sides: the halflings from the Rohorind Forest, the bandits from the Glowing Desert, and the insane and unpredictable Eldaarish, not to mention the yearly rampage of rabid semi-sentient "kreen" from the far west. This Kurnan village would rather pick up and leave their own town than fight, but if war comes upon them, they are ready for it.

Like many Kurnan males, Heru has no desire to deal with Drylanders. That's Lhonia's job, and she's good at it. Heru assumes that any Drylander trying to strike up a conversation with him is trying to weasel a way into offering a bribe. If someone from the Tablelands

approaches Heru while he is standing alone, he will walk away without a word, not wanting to even allow anyone watching to entertain the idea that he was taking bribes from a Drylander.

Lhonia Grey, on the other hand, has been trained to take bribes from Drylanders. Her Kurnan trainers taught her that people of the Tablelands are comfortable using bribery to do business. Faithfully following the policy of the Gray Sisters, Lhonia keeps a third of her bribes, and sends the rest to Kurn to be divided among the sisters of her order. She also sends detailed reports on who offered bribes, what the briber requested, and what they actually received. Most importantly, she reports to Kurn's tax bureau on unfamiliar persons who seem to be heading towards the city. Kurn collects most of its taxes by taking a portion of all goods brought into the city; the more that the Kurnan tax bureau knows ahead of time about who is coming, what their business is, and what goods they are carrying, the easier it is to make sure that no wealth falls through the cracks. Lhonia pretends to be the only Gray Herald in Fort Stench, but she has an apprentice spy who reports to her. Bilane, a seer, offers strangers various services and information about the town and about Kurn, and asks them friendly questions that she thinks will not arouse suspicion, but Bilane also uses *object reading* on belongings that she can touch without arousing their owner's suspicion. When she thinks there is more to learn, Bilane listens at doors to eavesdrop on conversations, and uses *remote sense* to learn everything that her other actions would not allow her to learn — particularly if the travelers have any special plans to deceive the gate taxers. Lhonia reports any pertinent information to Kurn's Tax Bureau and also passes information to Conak's Rock to make sure that some particularly wealthy mark does not sneak their way into Kurn (see *FFN* for more details).

Unknown to Lhonia, there is another spy at Fort Stench: Ptoby, one of the only two males in Kurn's School of Spies, and perhaps the only pterranean anywhere. *Ptoby* is not a genuine pterranean name, but it is the genuine name of this particular pterranean. Ptoby was hatched in Kurn after the Gray Heralds accidentally confiscated his egg during taxing procedures at Kurn's gates. No pterraneans had visited Kurn, and the Gray Heralds could not determine which traveler they had taken the egg from. The Scholars' Clave acquired the egg to study it, and when it hatched, the School of Spies brought "Ptoby" in as their pet. Gradually, the spies realized that he was pterranean, and sentient, but the older spies have never stopped thinking of Ptoby as their pet, which annoys

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him. Ptoby has yet to meet another pterrann and is actually afraid of what he'll find. As fond of his "aunts" at the School of Spies as they are of him, Ptoby has become a valuable spy, partly because no one expects a pterrann to be a templar and a spy, and because some people will talk to him that will not talk to anyone else. To strangers, Ptoby plays the part of the outsider, moaning about how closed and repressed the Kurnans are. For some reason, malcontents and troublemakers seem drawn to him like a moth to the flame.

In Fort Stench, Ptoby owns a tavern, "The Truth." Ptoby knows nothing about pterrann culture, but neither do his customers, so Ptoby makes up facts about his "heritage" as he goes along. Even if Ptoby were to encounter someone who knows about pterrann culture, Ptoby's remarks about his pterrann heritage are all tongue-in-cheek, so it's hard to tell when he's lying or just joking. Locals dislike the "Ptruth," as they call it, because much of Ptoby's sharp wit seems to come at the expense of Kurnan culture. When asked why so few locals frequent his tavern, Ptoby quips that his neighbors "can't handle the truth." Ptoby also routinely mocks House Azeth, recounts humorous personal innuendos about the seven bandit lords of the western deserts, and other local curiosities. Many

## **Kurn**



Beyond the northern reaches of the Trembling Plains lie the Banding Slopes, an ascending verdant belt that slopes upwards less than a day's travel from the city-state of Kurn. The city has a tremendous influence on the politics and trade of the Trembling Plains: most Eloy spend at least 75 days each year within the walls of Kurn's Merchant District, and Oronis' servants in the Trembling Plains include the Black Brethren, the Green Brothers, the Gray Heralds, and the School of Spies; another Kurnan order, the White Disciples, does not play a significant role in the Trembling Plains.

travelers describe Ptoby as the most entertaining creature that they have met. At least once every night, his clients bully him into repeating his most famous composition: "Seven things that you should never do with harnaq milk." The School of Spies sees that The Truth gets supplied with the best brews in the Kurnlands, and Ptoby always seems to have a spare room for interesting travelers from the south, sometimes even closing the tavern early just so that he can continue with an interesting conversation.

Ptoby is a talented spy, and while he does love Kurn, he resents being kept nearby; he wants to show the School of Spies what he can do in foreign lands. The terrible "ptruth," as far as Ptoby's assignment goes, is that his Kurnan spymasters are just too fond of him and don't want to let him go (see *FFN* for more details). Unknown to Ptoby or Bilane, governor Lhonia Grey is a double templar, formerly in Daskinor's service. From refugees, Lhonia has learned about the purge of psionic persons in Eldaarich, and as someone with a wild talent, Lhonia fears for her own life should she return. She takes whatever opportunities she can to speak to Drylanders in the Common tongue, and plans to make a run for the Tablelands soon in order to escape her angry Savak handlers, who sent her a summons over a year ago to return to Eldaarich.

Most of the city of Kurn has been closed to visitors for generations. The only open part of the city is the Merchant District, and thus it is the part familiar to residents of the Trembling Plains and the likely starting point for any journey in Kurn. The district itself is most unusual, for the Merchant District occupies the bottom of an ancient stone quarry at the city's southern edge. The quarry floor is more than 100 feet below the surrounding lands in some places, and visitors may only enter by traveling several miles along a canyon bed to reach the Merchant Gate leading into the quarry. Oronis's templars, known as "heralds", carefully screen all caravans and visitors to the Merchant District.

## **Kurn's Merchant District**

**Denizens:** Though the city appears large, much of it is in fact empty. During most of the year, Kurn is home to only about 8,000 people. The population is about 75% human, 9% elf, 3% half-elf, 7% dwarf, 1% half-giants and muls, 5% other (mostly baazrag and aarakocra). Though visitors can't easily discern this, the Merchant District is the only truly active part of the city and so most of the population can be encountered here. The citizens of Kurn are largely organized into

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claves, with the individuals in eachclave devoted to certain tasks, such asclaves for potters, for cobblers, for butchers, and so on. More than just guilds such as those that can be encountered in the Tablelands, clavemembers tend to live together and have little competition amongst members of the sameclave.

Nearly half of Kurn's current slave population are former Eldaarish refugees. Kurnans generally do not like or trust the Dimlanders, but Kurnans do treat children born in Kurn as Kurnan, regardless of their ancestry, and give the children opportunities to rise above slavery, joinclaves, and become full citizens.

**Defenses:** Stone walls several dozen feet high encircle the entire city. The walls also enclose the quarry that contains the Merchant District. Bastions are spaced along the walls, and from atop these towers, Kurn's guards can see for miles across the Banding Slopes, surveying the nearby farmlands. Any large group or unfamiliar caravan not approaching via the canyon will be identified from miles away, and raise alarms.

Kurn's guard is large and vigilant, numbering at least 1,000, and patrolling the walls and the surrounding lands. Though armies have not assaulted Kurn's walls in many lifetimes, the guard has had to fend off many swarms of trin and other dangerous beasts of the Trembling Plains. Many fear that Eldaarich might attempt an assault on Kurn if the guard becomes lax. The troops are well fed and their morale is high.

### **The Road to Kurn**

The road leading up to Kurn's gates runs along the bed of a steep canyon. One must enter this canyon road several miles before reaching the city, which offers several opportunities for Kurn to monitor those who are approaching. A caravan in the canyon bed would be vulnerable to attack, but Kurn keeps raiders away from the canyon and does not attack caravans itself, and so traders who travel to the region become comfortable making the approach. The road from the south to the Merchant Gate is wide and smooth, with multiple places where the canyon is wide enough that two caravans, one leaving and one arriving, can pass each other comfortably.

### **The Road to Conak's Rock**

At the beginning of the Cleansing Wars, when Kurn was an elven city, the current road was a deep river running from the mountains. The dried stony riverbed continues to serve as a road north of Kurn as well, leading all the way from what is now called Conak's

### **The Laws of Kurn**

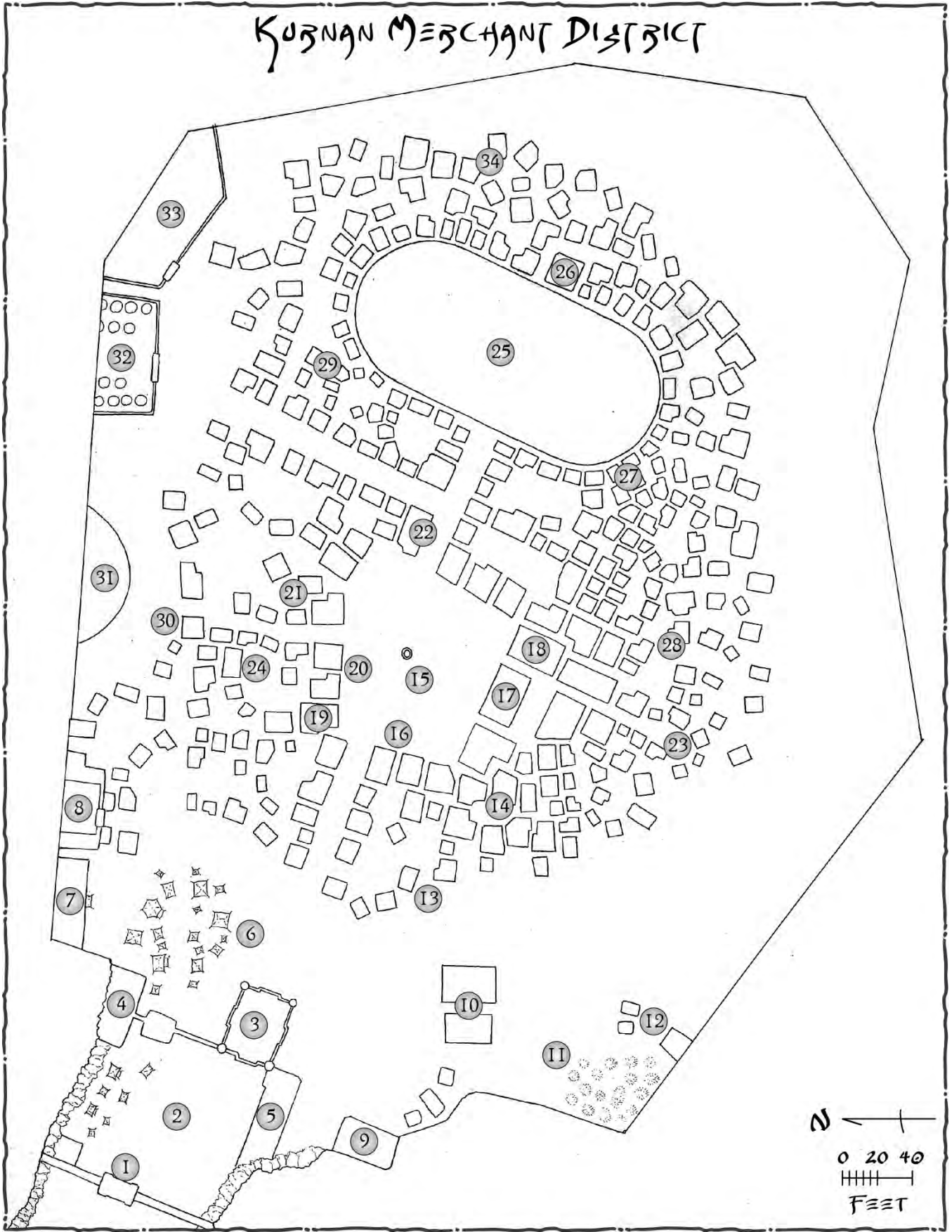
- Preserving magic, but not defiling magic, is lawful in Kurn, but all exchange of magical components or magical items must go through the templars.
- Spellcasters and mindbenders may not interfere with other people's senses or reasoning, or threaten or hurt others except in self-defense. Any accidental side-effects of magic or psionics will be dealt with as if they were deliberate.
- Every freeman in Kurn is required to carry a weapon and to assist in the defense of the city should it be attacked.
- All freemen are legally responsible for the actions of their children, slaves, and animals.
- All are taxed on entering Kurn. Prepare to be taxed by dividing your goods into eight equal parts.
- Those with mekillots, driks, or other enormous or dangerous beasts are required to hire the Teamsters Clave to move their wagons and beasts carefully through the city. Those with other beasts may also make use of Teamster services. (This last item is actually not the law, but the wasp-riders are the children of the Teamsters, and the heralds allow the slight deception, since the Teamsters do good work for reasonable value, and it does actually make the streets safer to have the Teamsters taking charge of driks and mekillots.)

Rock, past Kurn, and most of the way to Fort Protector. when it rains heavily in the mountains, though, as flash The original river has long since passed underground, and today runs all the way to feed the waters at Fort Stench. It is still generally best to get out of the road floods have been known to occasionally run down the old riverbed. Fortunately for Kurn, no Tyr-storms have made it this far.

### **The City Gates**

**1) The Merchant Gate** - As one approaches the city via the canyon bed, a large wall closes off the entire canyon. One can only enter through the great Merchant Gate, which is so large that a full House gate, like the rest of the Merchant Quarter, is more than 100 feet below that of the surrounding land (other than the canyon through which the trade road runs). Closer to the city, one can see signs that this part of the canyon was extensively quarried for generations, as the walls and floors are smoothly cornered. On a busy day, the

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line to the gate moves excruciatingly slowly, but typically the Merchant Gate stands open all hours of the day and night, with Oronis's heralds waiting to escort visitors through the entrance.

As entrants stand in line, Kurnan children seated on four-foot-long wasps ride up and down the line, chanting out the laws of Kurn most likely to affect foreigners. (See sidebar.)

**2) Tax Pavilion** - The gray-clad heralds of Oronis lead one group at a time into this pavilion. The wall, gate, and taxing buildings that make up the Tax Pavilion are all cut directly from the surrounding stone. Imposing, rock-cut reliefs of great figures have been carved into the quarry walls here, designed to make those standing in the pavilion feel very small.

Within the pavilion, the gray-robed female templars introduce themselves as "heralds of Oronis." While very few Kurnens speak Common, the heralds speak it fluently, and various heralds also speak an assortment of other tongues. Before a party is led into one of the taxing buildings, the heralds ask who in the group is a master, a freeman, a servant, or a slave. If the group does not answer this simple question immediately, then the templars will regard them as deceivers, and will take time and use magical and/or psionic means to make sure the taxation process is particularly thorough. The taxation process requires that individuals identify which servants and slaves belong to which master. As far as the heralds are concerned,

anyone who claims to be free is free. Once they have identified their status, each freeman, and each set of master / servants / slaves / possessions, is taken to a large, separate room in one of the three taxing buildings.

Throughout the various taxing buildings (see below), it is common to see the same design on the floor: a circle divided into nine equal segments. Though some visitors may mistake these for a decorative motif, they are in fact a practical tool. All cargos and treasures transported to Kurn must be divided evenly onto one of these circles, where one-ninth of the cargo is taken by Kurn's heralds as taxation (known as the King's Ninth).

For large cargos this is a straightforward process of piling things evenly upon a circle so that nine portions of equal value may be identified. For smaller cargos, or cargos of fewer than 9 of a particular item, an extensive set of rules governs the application of taxation. Aside from House Azeth and House Tsalaxa, none but the heralds themselves seem to know the formulas.

Typically, a monetary tax is demanded when a cargo cannot be divided into ninths.

Although the templars won't offer, visitors can ask them to hold some of their possessions until they leave the city again. For a silver piece, they will hold up to a 10 by 10 by 10-foot volume of material until for a maximum of 75 days. This is the best option for visitors who have valuables that they do not wish to trade in Kurn. Other than the silver piece, no taxes are paid on these items.

If money needs to be changed, one can do so at the taxing buildings. Gold and silver are accepted at face value in Kurn. The ceramic pieces and bits of the Tablelands will be accepted by the templars who will convert the coins into Kurnan money while taking a one-ninth exchange fee (that is, someone bringing 90 ceramic pieces into Kurn would pay 10 of them as an exchange fee, and receive 80 Kurnan ceramic pieces).

**3) Central Taxing Building** - The central taxing building is by far the largest, with a massive vaulted room designed for holding a great argosy and the mekillots pulling it, while the caravan is inspected and its cargo divvied up for taxation.

**4) North Taxing Building** - The northern taxing building contains the offices for a court, and for the herald's other administrative duties. Cargos identified as sensitive in some way will often be directed through the northern building.

**5) South Taxing Building** - Most ordinary travelers with mundane cargo enter the city through this taxing building. The heralds seem tireless and wait patiently for individuals to arrange their matters for taxation.

**6) Makers Square** - All those that endure the excruciating taxing process exit the northern side of the taxing buildings into Makers Square. The floor of the square itself is rough stone, like most of the rest of the Merchant District.

Makers Square is named for a clave of wizards who helped build Kurn's new walls. Much of this square is open to allow large caravans to make their way into the city, though a market full of tents at the northern part of the square houses a wide variety of sellers, buyers, and food purveyors to those first entering the city.

**7) The Herald's Stores** - At the north of Makers Square, a single unobtrusive door leads to a large underground hall (this hall lies beneath the city districts that sit to the north of the Merchant District and are at a higher elevation). In this hall, the templars buy and sell all restricted goods, except for the buying and selling of

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slaves, which is handled through the courts. Goods bought and sold here include magical components, magical potions (mostly produced by the Gardeners Clave), candles (produced by the Chandlers Clave), and a few scrolls and spellbooks. The templar stores are open from noon to an hour after sunset, and at any time there are between two and ten heralds handling purchases, a handful of templars from the White Brotherhood (who handle matters that require knowledge of wizardry), several wizard customers and one or two sellers who have come to purchase goods from the heralds.

**8) House Azeth Complex** - A cluster of buildings at the northern edge of Makers Square, located directly next to the Heralds Stores, is a complex controlled by Kurn's flagship merchants: House Azeth. Most of this complex runs underground; House Azeth is the only merchant house that Kurn trusts to not violate its law against digging without permission (trust is a relative term, since the templars still make regular inspections.) The caverns here are wide enough and run deep enough for Azeth to store its massive argosy wagons, as well as large vaults for its trade goods and its treasures. The complex is situated to make it easy for Azeth to move its argosy wagons through the city and into the compound.

**9) Teamsters Clavehouse** - One of the older buildings in the Trade Quarter, the Teamsters Clavehouse is built into a corner of the quarry walls. With the exception of House Azeth - which can handle its own wagons - mekillots must be turned over to the teamsters to manage within the city's walls. Because the great lizards pose a danger to the public, all caravans must employ the Teamsters Clave to manage all mekillots and their wagons. The building itself is not built in the traditional fashion; the clavehouse is a two-story, L-shaped stone building that supports the tarps that make up a large tent housing the tools and apprentices of the clave, including five of Kurn's rare half-giants.

**10) Teamsters Posts** - These posts are used to lash up the wagons. For a fee (lower than that charged for handling mekillots), the teamsters will assist with inix handling and stabling, although there are others that will do this for less money.

**11) Beast Pens** - This is where the Teamsters' Clave keeps smaller pack animals such as inixes, crodlus, and kanks. While not as dangerous to people as mekillots, the creatures must still be left with the teamsters, as they're too dangerous to wander the city. Dozens to several hundred creatures might be housed here at any given time.

**12) Handlers Clave Tent** - The Handlers are a small clave but one of great importance, for they are the most skilled beastmasters in Kurn. Mindbenders by training, the handlers maintain their modest clave tent near the Beast Pens so that they can swiftly help when animals become too unruly for the Teamsters. Though this is perhaps the most common issue they help with, it is not the most important. The handlers also play a key role in helping to rebuff creatures of the Trembling Plains that would threaten the city.

**13) House Tsalaxa Complex** - The Gray Heralds have allowed House Tsalaxa to lease an area towards the center of the trade quarter, where they occupy a complex of buildings that abuts the southwest corner of the central square and is also accessible from Makers Square. The Tsalaxa complex is second only to Azeth's in size, but its agents are wary for the heralds have warned them not to attempt to tunnel beneath the surface of their compound and threatened that, if they did, the Draji templars would be notified about Tsalaxa's own secret tunnel system in Draji. The Tsalaxa agents are deeply concerned that Kurn's templars know a secret that even Draji's templars do not. This has prompted a debate within House Tsalaxa about whether they have a spy in their ranks or if perhaps Kurn has a more powerful surveillance apparatus than one would expect for a small and remote city-state.

**14) Mekel's Bakery** - Not far from Makers Square, the delicious aroma of freshly-baked bread fills the air along the southern path, emanating from the small one-story building of Mekel's Bakery. In front of the building is a long table, with a sun-stained white fabric awning above it. There is no seating at the bakery, as Mekel prefers people use his bread as a supplement in their meals and for them to eat elsewhere. The bakery is only closed from midnight until dawn each day, and is a common destination for those in Kurn. There are always two attendants staffing the table and selling sakkanmu flat bread.

Inside the building are eight hearths: round, deep holes with fires placed at their bottoms. The bread is baked by placing the flattened dough upon the walls of the holes and baking it for several minutes. The bread here is tan, wide, and meant to have other foods placed on it. It is uncommon for Mekel the baker to be seen out front of his shop, as he employs his staff to sell and bake the bread for him. Mekel takes his work quite

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seriously, however, and is not only a true artisan, but also a savvy one, as only he knows the exact recipe for his bread and he prepares the dough himself. New customers often find that it is the best bread they've ever eaten - a light and airy bread with excellent seasoning. It is uncommon to find a line in front of the shop, though, as the bakers inside are very efficient, beginning work long before sunrise to keep a full stock on hand.

**16) Brewers Hall** - This large stone building is the home of the Brewers Clave, which also operates a very popular drinking establishment. The Brewers create most of the drinks that are popular throughout the inns and taverns of Kurn, but in this building they constantly try out new concoctions. Some of these prove popular and are eventually distributed to Kurn's taverns, while others are unpopular and quickly discarded. Either way, it is a popular pastime for visitors and Kurnans alike to participate in these tasting sessions, where new flavors of brews are sampled and critiqued. These sessions are an affordable indulgence for Kurn's commoners, and a celebration of the diverse flavors and aromas that can be coaxed from meager resources.

**17) The Lost Crodlu Inn** - Located directly on the central square, the Lost Crodlu is Kurn's largest inn, containing dozens of rooms across six different floors. It is the primary inn that caters to newcomers and first-time travelers. Many of the other inns cater primarily to regular clientele, and some are quite wary of newcomers, but the Lost Crodlu is open to anyone, and the tavern on the ground floor of the Lost Crodlu is always brimming with visitors.

**18) The Hosts Clavehouse** - The Hosts Clave, located on Kurn's central square directly adjacent to the Lost Crodlu, operates all the inns and taverns of Kurn, but they also have their own clavehouse. Many of the staff of the various inns and taverns live and sleep in the Hosts clavehouse rather than the establishments that they operate. The clavehouse is itself operated as an inn, and the youngest members of the clave receive their training by managing the facility. The rooms are sometimes available for rent to visitors.

**19) Sellers Clave Building** - The elves (and a few half-elves) in the Sellers Clave make no goods of their own, but instead specialize in selling either the goods of other claves that could not be bothered with the headache of sales or the niche goods that come into Kurn via trade. Their building, located on Kurn's



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central square, serves as an emporium. It is said that the elves of the Sellers Clave can sell sand to a dune trader, and though many genuinely useful items are available at the Sellers Clave, it is true that the elves are remarkably adept at convincing people to buy things they do not need.

**20) The Bakers Clave** - Though the quality of its bread is inferior to the gourmet offerings at Mekel's bakery, the Bakers clavehouse on the central square of Kurn produces enormous quantities of bread at an affordable price. This bread forms the basis of most Kurnan diets.

**21) Drawers Clave Building** - This small building - set just off the main square - is the base of operations for the Drawers Clave, whose speciality is retrieving water for other claves so that they don't need to make daily treks to the well. The runners who actually carry the water, which is difficult and taxing manual labor, are hulking baazrags. But it is an insight into Kurnan society that even work as mundane as hauling water and performed by creatures as unusual as baazrags is accorded respect: the runners are invariably treated with kindness wherever they go and none seem as downtrodden as one would expect from those performing such tedious yet physically demanding work.

**22) The Cobblers Stores** - One of the bigger sites on the central square, the Cobblers Stores is the single vast location where all boots, shoes, and sandals in Kurn are both manufactured and sold. The Cobblers Clave also makes and sells a wide range of other leather goods, from belts to satchels to waterskins, and the quality of their products is exceptionally high. Nearly 100 cobblers live and work here.

**23) Butchers Clave Complex** - This complex of buildings is where all the animals brought into Kurn are taken for slaughter. Any type of meat is available for sale here, as is a large supply of bones, animal skins, and other byproducts, as the clave prides itself on wasting very little. In the center of the complex is a building with a high chimney - a large incinerator where anything that can't be repurposed is burned. The unusual height of the chimney is to keep as much of the smell as possible away from the city, though some lingering odor is inescapable near such a large butchery operation.

**24) The Mill** - Due to the Merchant District's high quarry walls, this mill is exclusively powered by animals or slaves rather than wind power, and has two sets of posts with which it might be powered. At

present, a surly-looking dwarven templar named Amaranth watches over a crew of about a dozen Drylander mul slaves that lounge around, drinking and fighting until someone shows up and needs their services. Escaped gladiatorial slaves from Raam, the muls are deeply enjoying the new-found freedoms of this so-called "Kurnan slavery" and get out of much of their work just by the virtue of looking disagreeable and dangerous. Many of the mill's regulars, however, seem to have figured out the outlanders' trick and now approach them fearlessly.

**25) The Sporting Grounds** - Kurn has an arena that can be seen from the Great Library, but it is not open to visitors. Instead, the denizens of the Merchant District can attend games at the Sporting Grounds, which is a large open field, sunk below the level of the rest of the district and encircled by several rows of seating that descend from street level to the playing field. The bowl-shaped design of the arena means that games can also be viewed from many of the surrounding buildings.

Visitors to Kurn are often surprised to discover that the games played here are never fatal to their participants, but are nevertheless quite interesting. Chariot-racing, crodlu-jousting, wasp relays, and archery competitions are all frequently held events, as are battles between ferocious monsters. It is an open secret that these monsters are in fact illusions, but most people in Kurn go along with the fiction that they are real monsters, and the children of Kurn, in particular, believe this.

During the Flamesky season, when refugees flood into Kurn, the Sporting Grounds become a large tent city as the vast majority of Eloy who come to Kurn temporarily set up camp here. A large makeshift bazaar forms in the center of the Grounds, becoming a sort of secondary mercantile exchange for those seeking to do business in Kurn.

**26) Lancers' Rest Inn** - Lancers' Rest is the name of this establishment, and this wild bar caters almost exclusively to off-duty soldiers of Kurn's army. They throng this large hall, gathering on the benches, long tables, and assorted balconies to drink their nights away. The inn is close to the Sporting Grounds and especially popular on the days of sporting events. The liquor here is of surprisingly high quality, and notably cheap, too - a fact that ensures it remains extremely popular with the rank-and-file soldiery.

**27) Gamers Quarters** - Though there is no blood spilled in Kurn's Sporting Grounds, there is plenty of

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gambling, and this is the remit of the Gamers Clave, consisting entirely of elves, who have a monopoly on betting at Sporting Grounds events. All manner of wagers, both large and small, can be placed with the elves in this small cluster of buildings just off the Sporting Grounds. In exchange for this monopoly, the elves take responsibility for clearing the grounds after sporting events. After settling all the bets for an event, the elves work in concert to clean the grounds. Bettors who have gotten out of their depth and taken losses they can't cover have been known to work off their debt by helping with this cleaning process, and on most nights a number of such debtors will be helping with the cleaning as they seek to clear their name.

**28) Procurers Tent** - In a modest tent in the southern part of the Merchant District lies the home of the Procurers Clave. Another elven clave, the procurers make a business out of obtaining goods and services for their patrons, mostly foreigners and wealthy claves. For the right fee, the elves are willing to procure – or attempt to procure – nearly anything that's legal (and even some things that aren't).

**29) Crazy Atsu's Residence** - Although "Crazy Atsu" is a powerful wizard (Male Human Wizard (Preserver) 9, CN) in his own right, this Kurnan social outcast could not get accepted by his parents' clave, and none of the others would have him because of his eccentric ways. Even the unusually eclectic Scholars Clave rejected Atsu for membership. Atsu recently went on a long expedition with some members of the Scholars Clave and came home with a foreign wife from a faraway land called "Saragar." Her hair and clothes are odd and her mannerisms are even odder. To make matters worse, no one can pronounce her name, so all refer to her as "Crazy Atsu's Wife." Atsu's oddly shaped home, an eclectic blend of stone and glass, is of his own making. Colored flashes of light can be seen coming from the inside of his home all through the night, and occasionally loud noises are heard. Atsu can often be found at the templar stores trying to sell his latest creation (recent examples include magically animated children's toys, non-magical explosive powder, and farming tools that convert to proper weapons with a simple twist of the handle). Rumor is that his parents, both prominent members of the Makers Clave, continue to send him money to keep him afloat.

**30) Flaming Ice Tavern** - This dining establishment for the wealthy has become famous enough that some adventurous nobles from the Tablelands have learned of it and travel to Kurn just for the experience. The

tavern's claim to fame is that it finds a way to offer ice taken from the Snow Crowns, serving a variety of ice-cold foods and drinks. The clientele at the Flaming Ice will often be some of the most audacious and interesting individuals that one will find anywhere on Athas, making the restaurant a popular spot for those seeking out unusual opportunities or the chance to meet truly unexpected visitors.

**31) The Great Library** - Easily the tallest building in the Merchant District, the Great Library is the only structure from which a non-Kurnan can view the rest of the city. Although it requires climbing many flights of stairs to first reach the level of the rest of the city, and then even more stairs to reach the Great Library's observatory, most visitors to Kurn make the climb at least once out of sheer curiosity, eager to see Kurn in its full glory - from the Elven Tower to the Noble and Artisan Quarters. Despite the view, most visitors leave feeling somewhat disappointed that, after all the mystery, Kurn appears to be a city like any other—less grand, if anything, than Urik, Nibenay, or Balic.

The Library and the templars' subterranean complexes, both on the quarry's north wall, are the only locations in Kurn that connect the Merchant District and the rest of the city. Kurn's residents use the Library to go from one section of the city to the other, but the entrances leading between the Library and the rest of the city are heavily guarded and visitors to Kurn cannot pass.

The Great Library itself contains thousands of documents, including a handful of copies of codices purported to date back to the Blue Age, while the originals are said to be stored in the Elven Tower (though not even the librarians know that the originals are in fact stored in New Kurn). A hundred or so documents are available for any visitor to read - these are mounted along the walls. Travelers and scholars from distant lands often sit around the tables arguing about the documents, and the topics range from history to agriculture to religion to arcane magic. Travelers who can cast themselves as expert "retrievers of antiquities" rather than ruin-plunderers may discover the Great Library to be the best spot they have ever experienced for finding work and adventure leads. Additionally, the Great Library's scholars will sometimes purchase ancient documents and statues – valuables that others would have no interest in.

**32) The Heralds Granary** - Because the city hosts a large population of refugees during the Flamesky season, enormous granaries are needed to keep everyone fed during this time. Dried grains, beans, and

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### **Rumors in Kurn's Merchant District**

Characters who spend time gossiping with persons in the Merchant District may learn the following rumors, based on their Gather Information check. If in Kurn's Merchant District during Flamesky, they will probably meet other groups that have their own rumors (see *FFN* for more details).

**(DC 10)** Another group of arrogant Drylanders ignored our warnings and got themselves killed up in Rifak's Wall - I hope that the drakes appreciated the meal. If you want to touch snow and ice, there are merchants who will sell you some that they purchase from the Silvaarak. If you're brave and lucky and very strong, go climb the Snow Crowns. Only someone that wants to die should consider climbing Rifak's Wall. Not even the Sons of the Drake climb into those icy peaks.

**(DC 10)** More refugees than ever escape the Dim Lands these days, and more and more of them have strange and terrible psionic powers. Daskinor trains them in unarmed combat, to come here as spies and to destroy us. (**True and False** - Daskinor recently ordered that persons demonstrating psionic abilities be imprisoned or put to death. Consequently, Eldaarish persons with the most flashy and overt psionic abilities are fleeing for their lives. Most refugees escape in order to avoid death or torment. Some of these refugees are in fact former templars or former members of Eldaarich's secret police who found themselves on the wrong side of what passes for law in Eldaarich. However, some refugees are in fact active spies for the Savak, Eldaarich's secret police. These spies send information back to their homeland and assassinate other Eldaarish refugees (mostly former Savak agents) who know too much and must be silenced. The reason that so many Eldaarish learn martial arts is that Daskinor's Red Guards burn people alive for possessing weapons, even a dagger or a sling. The Dimlanders teach themselves unarmed combat skills because their lives depend on it - the strong prey on the weak.

**(DC 12)** Crazy Atsu recently went on a long expedition with some members of the Scholars Clave and came home with a foreign wife from a faraway land called "Saragar." "Crazy Atsu's Wife's" hair and clothes are odd, she dresses immodestly and her manners even more odd. I have no idea how to pronounce her name. Poor thing, trapped in that odd-shaped meld of stone and glass that Atsu made himself here in the Merchant District. As late as midnight, I've seen colored flashes of light coming from the inside of his home, and heard loud popping noises. I hear that Atsu's parents, both prominent members of the Makers Clave, continue to send him money to keep him afloat. No clave will have him. Even the Scholar's Clave turned down his request for citizenship.

**(DC 14)** An Eldaarish woman, Prodigy, married Oronis and then left him and took his secrets back to her homeland. (**True and False** - Prodigy was born in Kurn but her parents were Eldaarish refugees. She was a spy, but spied on Eldaarich for Kurn. She did marry the king, and did leave him, and has now joined the Order. See *Wisdom of the Drylanders*.)

**(DC 16)** The Great Library will pay for ancient documents, and provides lifesaving information to associated adventurers willing to explore the ruined cities of the Snow Crowns.

**(DC 18)** Raam's troubles have gotten worse. They say that the Dragon came to that city. Tighten your belts - there's another wave of refugees coming here to take our work and eat our food. If the Dimlanders don't take our city, the Drylanders will.

faro are added to the silos gradually throughout the year and, by the start of Flamesky, the granaries are stuffed to the brim. The granary complex is heavily guarded at all times.

**33) Auction Square and Heralds Courts** - This small walled-off courtyard in the northeast of the city, set against the quarry walls, is known as Auction Square. Items that are taken as tax in the King's Ninth are auctioned off here weekly.

The square also connects to some of the templar offices behind the quarry walls and underneath other parts of the city. Double doors in the wall north of Auction Square lead to the Heralds' Courts. These courts are open and lit at all times, although during evenings, half of the templars on duty are asleep in side rooms if their help is not required. Several heralds are on duty here at any time, plus two Black Brethren templar officers and thirty militia members. Twelve large-size, solid stone holding cells sit behind the courts, deep in the wall.

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**34) Five Quills Inn** - This is one of the more expensive inns in Kurn's Merchant District. Nestled near the district's cliffs, it is one of the few establishments that specifically caters to aarakocra, featuring an open-air tavern around its front entrance and a large number of sleeping perches atop its roof. Five Quills is often occupied by a corps of aarakocra mercenaries that work for Kurn's templars, ferrying high-priority missives and supplies outside the city when called upon. The inn is much more expensive than other inns in the Merchant District, but it is the only place in the city for claustrophobic aarakocra to stay overnight, and anyone who starts a fight here must deal with the (well connected) aarakocra as well.

**35) Barbers Clave Tent** - This elven clave is not just for those who cut hair. Rather, the Kurnan Barbers cut hair (and give shaves), pull teeth, and do a lot of the tattoo work that gets done in Kurn. The Barbers are a popular clave, and members are often asked to sing at festivals. The Barbers also sell information, and if asked for information unknown to them, will discreetly ask around and procure the information in a day or two. The Barbers seem to have some bad blood or professional rivalry with the Procurers Clave, as the

Procurers are known to have a strong dislike of the Barbers for some reason.

**36) Armorers Store** - Though they are based in Fort Stench, the Armorers Clave maintains a storefront in the Merchant District to sell their wares. The Armorers produce nearly all of the armor throughout the Trembling Plains, and are extremely good at what they do. The clave keeps their prices low and affordable, however, because they believe that everyone deserves good armor - they do raise their prices for custom work, however.

### **The Elven Spire**

Built in the ninth and tenth King's Ages, this was one of the buildings that survived Albeorn's attack during the Cleansing Wars. Though not accessible from the Market District, this ancient monument is visible from the district and indeed the entirety of the city. Its elegant heights, decorated with carved figures and sacred elven geometry, appears to be wrought of finest alabaster. On clear days, the spire shines so radiantly that it is visible as far south as Conak's Rock, its brightness matched only by Heaven's Eye.

## **Silt Side**

*"Have you ever watched scorpions mate? They circle each other for a while, never taking their eyes off each other, their tails ready to sting at the first sign of treachery. Then they approach each other carefully, locking their claws together, but still keeping stingers at the ready. The male drops his packet of seed on the ground, and they then move and turn together so that the female can pick it up. When the transaction is complete, they release each other and slowly back away. At any time, if something unexpected happens, they react on impulse, stinging each other to death.*

*"That's what it used to be like, trading with Kerillis. Now she and Corik act like old friends. I say: wait and see. These Eldaarish are up to no good, mark my words. And where do you suppose they get all that gold?"*

- An anonymous low-level Azeth agent, after four stiff drinks.

Silt Side sits at the intersection of the Sea of Silt, the Trembling Plains, and the northern badlands and foothills, and marks the northern boundary of the

Storm Coast. To an even greater extent than Fort Stench, Silt Side is a seasonal village, populating for a few weeks and then emptying again four times every year when High Templar Kerillis of Eldaarich and Corik Azeth meet to trade. By agreement, they do not meet during the Flamesky season because of the trin threat.

To avoid alarming or provoking the paranoid Eldaarish, Azeth sends a mere 20 guards to accompany an uncovered mekillot wagon through the dangerous badlands path to Silt Side. During the days after the Great Caravan arrives in Kurn, several of these small caravans shuttle from Kurn and Fort Stench to Silt Side. When the trading is done for the season, Azeth vacates nearly the entire village at once to transport all of the Eldaarish goods together. Until the next season, a small handful of old Azeth guards man Silt Side; the village of course standing empty during Flamesky.

The bridge from North Island had not been extended for generations until Kerillis obtained permission from the King's Council to trade with House Azeth. While in previous years, Kulag trade with House Azeth had

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been a secretive affair, conducted via silt ship in the dark of night, Kulag templars and sailors now openly trade with Azeth traders, all under the watchful eyes

of the Red Guards and the Savak, Eldaarich's secret police.

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## **The Silvaarak Settlements**

There are three tribes of aarakocra in the Trembling Plains region, all related to one another. The Silvaaraks of Winter Nest (see below) are by far the most numerous and important, and it is from them that the other two tribes of aarakocra, located at Storm Peak and Ice Perch, derive. The three groups are on good terms with one another now, but differences regarding their religious affiliations and associations with Oronis of Kurn limit their interactions.

Immediately distinguishable from their distant relatives that live in the badlands and deep desert, the aarakocra of the White Mountains have gray beaks, black eyes, and plumage that ranges from purest white to silver to shades of pale blue. They call themselves Silvaarak (the people of the silver wing), and their unique attitude towards non-aarakocra likely has much to do with the behavior of their human, elven, and half-elven neighbors. The aarakocra find enough in common with the Kurnans, herders, and elf tribes of the Trembling Plains to trade with them, although there are tensions. The aarakocra continue to raid the herders' livestock, but the herders, instead of killing the avians whenever they see them overhead, have instead taken to capturing the winged raiders and holding them for ransom as they would with human or elven raiders.

The Silvaaraks settled in the White Mountains during the late Green Age, though at that time they lived among the southern foothills. Over time, they gradually moved ever farther up the slopes, seeking to avoid the goblin raiders that brutally hunted them in search of slaves and meat. During the Time of Magic the Silvaarak finally moved onto the glacier fields above the treeline, seeking to avoid all contact with the murderous goblins and feral halflings that increasingly fought one another in the forests below.

During the Cleansing Wars, the aarakocra distantly observed the desolation of the plains and the assault by Daskinor on the goblins. Hoping to avoid becoming victims of another Champion's wrath, some Silvaarak elders suggested approaching Daskinor and seeking an alliance with him. The tribe narrowly decided to remain silent and hidden, and thus they passed the Wars without being detected or attacked. Generations

later, however, the feeling of goodwill towards Daskinor for having eliminated the goblin threat probably contributed to the ease with which Daskinor's templars captured some Silvaaraks for use as guides in the Wastes.

Despite their cold environs, the aarakocra shun all but the most minimal use of fire. The aarakocra's feathers provide substantial insulation against the cold and fire poses too much of a risk of setting their feathers alight.

The Silvaaraks hunt far and wide, using their advantage of flight to seek small mammals and birds across the Snow Crown Mountains. Their preferred hunting weapons are light javelins and daggers, though resourceful birdmen have been known to bring down prey with dropped stones. Though the Silvaaraks will eat berries and fruit, they much prefer meat, and they would rather eat ice than drink water.

Before a young Silvaarak is permitted to hunt alone, or is considered a hunter and warrior, they must fly alone to some isolated place in the mountains and seek their vision. This rite of passage usually lasts for more than 20 days and includes the use of hallucinogenic plants found in the foothills. Unfortunately, this tradition has caused many young aarakocra to be too easily found and captured over the years by dark spiders or Eldaarish templars.

### **Winter Nest**

Formed from a mixture of ice, stone, and bricks, the aarakocran village of Winter Nest rests in the Snow Crowns nestled on Mount Cassiorstha. Winter Nest has a population of 650 aarakocra, all related to one another.

Winter Nest is located on a glacier at 12,400 feet, in a bowl of the arms of Mount Cassiorstha. Once, the town could only be reached via flying, but the aarakocra permitted a narrow single-person path to be cut in the cliffs two King's Ages past. This path is solely for the use of the Kurnan members of the Green Brotherhood who patrol the mountains and only they know that it exists. The path is extremely treacherous and can be blocked by a single icefall or avalanche; if enemies

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attempt to use the path to approach their village, the Silvaarak plan to release ice, snow, and rock to block the path.

Any traveler who managed to visit Winter Nest would find it a strange and fascinating place, from the use of ice as mortar, to the vertical orientation. As flyers, the Silvaarak see no need for walkways, stairs, or ladders. Instead, they surround their buildings with a series of landing platforms and resting perches that barely resemble the streets and marketplaces of human cities.

For the most part, the aarakocra of Winter Nest stay in the peaks of the White Mountains, but occasionally, particularly during the Ral's Rest season when game is scarce in the mountains, they descend to the Trembling Plains to hunt. Silvaarak traders regularly travel to Kurn, where Oronis had perches constructed for them in the merchant district - officially to trade, but really to watch the Kurnan sports. Despising the slave bloodsports of the Drylanders, Kurnans amuse themselves with games that, while not particularly *safe*, are at least not *intentionally* lethal. The Silvaarak find Kurnan stilt-boxing particularly entertaining, and have been known to place heavy bets on the "paper races" - relay races between young Kurnan children mounted on giant wasps. In most other respects, the Silvaarak community tends to keep to itself. House Azeth seeks to trade directly with them, but the Silvaarak forgo profit for privacy and only deal with Azeth in their visits to Kurn's Merchant District. Their past experiences with the residents of the Bandit States and the Eldaarish keep the Silvaarak cautious in their dealings with others.

The newest generation of Silvaarak is challenging the tribe's long standing isolationist policies, however. A growing number of these young Silvaaraks desire to explore the world beyond the mountains and interact with other civilized cultures. If these vocal and persistent youths persuade enough of their fellow Silvaarak, Winter Nest may completely abandon its isolationist ways, or the tribe might split into two or more tribes. Today, the Silvaarak are the largest cohesive aarakocran tribe in the known world. It is something of a miracle that such a large tribe has held together for so long.

Traaka (Female Aarakocra Cleric (Air) 7, LG), the village leader, prefers to protect Winter Nest by keeping it separate from the lower lands, but Traaka also understands the call of the sky that makes the young aarakocra want to soar beyond the summits and explore the world. Traaka seeks to define a policy that

allows such exploration without endangering or dividing her community.

There is little or no liquid water in Winter Nest, as the Silvaarak seldom travel so far that they must carry water with them. When necessary, they carry ice, and keep emergency ice stashed in their mountain hideouts.

Winter Nest has a number of preservers. None of these are necromants or shadow wizards because the Silvaaraks associate necromancy with defiling and they have no concept of shadow magic. Any necromant or shadow wizard, even if a preserver, will be treated as a defiler in Winter Nest. To the aarakocra, who value life and the natural order, undeath appears as a perversion of the natural world; defiling and necromancy show equal disrespect for life. The Silvaarak believe in burying their dead under cairns of stone, doing so in an ice field two valleys northeast of Winter Nest, and consider disturbing the dead one of the greatest sacrileges. The Silvaaraks have seen cerulean magic but are unaware that it is associated with the Tyr-storms, one of which they observed - from a safe distance - with great unease as it cut furiously across the Trembling Plains.

The Silvaaraks amuse themselves with flying games and whistling music. They can force air out of their nostrils (which are really no more than holes in their beaks) to whistle much like a human, though with greater tonal range and more volume. Groups of aarakocra can form choruses of up to twenty individuals, all whistling a common tune, just as humans sing in choirs.

The aarakocra of Winter Nest have also developed an interesting game for sloping sheets of ice or snow: they slide down icy slopes, with their claws curled under their feet as runners and their wings uplifted, making them light enough to slide. This is a popular game among the young Silvaaraks. Young males in particular like to slide down an ice floe and then launch themselves off the precipices that frequently lie at the bottom.

Most Silvaaraks are adherents of the faith of Air, and accordingly, Winter Nest's Air Temple is the grandest structure in the village. The temple is built like a huge brazier, with four legs made of massive evergreen tree trunks dragged up from the foothills centuries ago. These trunks, each more than 100 feet long, are set in the icy ground and canted to nearly join at the tops. There lies a concave plate of ice, 20 feet in diameter, held up between the four posts with a hole 8 feet

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around cut in its center. Priests of Air preach from the center of the bowl, while congregants gather on the rim of the bowl and on the perches placed at intervals along the legs.

Every summer the ice bowl in the center of the Air Temple melts away in the bright crimson sunshine, and a new plate must be fashioned in the fall. The Ice priests assist the Air clerics in finding the strongest white ice and making the new bowl. The four tree trunk posts have stood, firmly rooted in the permafrost, for more than fifteen King's Ages.

The Ice Temple in Winter Nest is only slightly smaller than that of Air. The Ice Temple is built of large sheets of translucent white and blue ice, layered upon one another to create a five-sided pyramid more than 40 feet tall. The interior is sunken below ground level - dug into the glacier - so all the worshippers are surrounded by primordial ice throughout the services. Fresh plates of ice are added to the temple exterior throughout the summer.

Winter Nest is ruled by clerics of Air and Ice drawn from the leading aarakocra families. The clerics meet in a large hall in Winter Nest to discuss community issues; when there is a particularly contentious debate, the priests adjourn to the very summit of Mount Cassiorstha. There, perched on the ice, surrounded by the sky, and overlooking the village, the priests of the two faiths pray together for guidance.

Almost 500 years ago, the first Kurnan explorers discovered the aarakocra of the White Mountains. The Silvaaraks had been watching the Kurnans for King's Ages, observing the settlement of Kurn and the wars against the halflings in Orohna Valley. At first the Silvaaraks avoided contact, using their wings and their superior knowledge of the mountains' vastnesses to evade the Kurnans.

But several years after Kurn's resettlement, the priests in Winter Nest received a vision in which they saw the Silvaaraks and the Kurnans living in friendship. Soon thereafter, Silvaarak messengers greeted the Kurnan templars, and the first aarakocra embassy traveled to the palace of Oronis in Kurn. The Silvaaraks concluded that this sorcerer-king was indeed different from Daskinor and the others, and they established an alliance that endures to this day.

### **Storm Peak**

In the very southern tip of the southern Snow Crowns lies the aarakocra village of Storm Peak. These

Silvaaraks departed from Winter Nest three King's Ages ago over a religious doctrinal dispute. Their heretical leader, Liikris, convinced a small core of his Silvaarak fellows to accept his heretical views. Ostracized from the community on order of the Winters Nest clerics, Liikris led his congregation south to found the new settlement of Storm Peak on a narrow ledge that reached around the icy summit of Mount Shtrawwgak.

The area is prone to violent storms, in which the Silvaarak villagers delight. Their homes are built along the narrow ledge, using slabs of stone dug deep through the ice to rest on the bedrock beneath. There is no way to reach Storm Peak but by flying, and even then, the peak is so high and prone to terrible storms that only the native aarakocra, who have practice living here and who adore Lightning, are able to fly around it with impunity.

The center of the community is the Temple of Lightning. This building is not even an enclosed structure, but is simply a series of trenches cut in the bare rock face above the village, forming a narrow cone of grooves that converge up near the very peak itself. Clan shamans have incised signs and sigils of faith into the black rock. For worship, the aarakocra perch along the cliffside grooves and beseech the skies to open and bathe them in rain, wind, and blasts of lightning and thunder.

45 Silvaaraks live in Storm Peak. The leader of the villagers is Nureeak (Male Aarakocra Wizard (Preserver) 7, CN), a tall and lanky aarakocra with a sharp intellect and unshakeable faith. Nureeak has governed the people for seven years, gradually increasing trade contacts with the herders of the Trembling Plains and House Azeth. The aarakocra barter for animals and finished goods, and have reconsidered what was once a given: that the Silvaaraks should avoid all contact with the peoples of the Trembling Plains. Storm Peak is currently the only aarakocra community trading directly with any of the people of the Trembling Plains.

Nureeak has come to believe that times are changing, and that soon the day will come when his people should recommence contact with the Silvaaraks of Winter Nest who expelled them generations ago. He has been working patiently to convince his followers that such a move would be wise, but even today the villagers of Storm Peak remain divided on the issue. His people still feel as one with their Winter Nest relatives, but do not wish to live with them. Through exposure to the Eloy and the elves, Nureeak has been

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exposed to the concept of multiple clans of the same tribe, and now speaks of the Storm Peak clan of the Silvaarak tribe, a new concept in aarakocra society. He seeks for an opportunity to discuss this with Traaka, but the bitterness of the original split makes him hesitant to simply fly up and approach her.

### **Ice Perch**

Two centuries ago, a small group of Silvaarak who were on particularly good terms with Oronis left to establish a small village, Ice Perch, north of Kurn and south of Orohna Valley. These Silvaarak continue to bring back gifts to their relatives in Winter Nest, but Ice Perch is independent and somewhat secretive. Unbeknownst to their brothers and sisters in Winter Nest, the Silvaarak of Ice Perch serve Oronis, working with the other flying creatures that obey Oronis to help ensure unwanted visitors do not climb the mountains and discover the secrets of the Orohna Valley. The Silvaarak of Ice Perch send many of their most skilled

mindbenders and preservers to New Kurn to train with the Kurnans, and some of these students even stay on in the city. Kurnans trade metal implements to the aarakocra, which the Silvaarak have neither the knowledge nor the temperament to make, in return for ice, glutu fur, and feathers.

Because the Silvaaraks of Ice Perch are party to the secret of New Kurn, and have their own secret village to protect, they avoid contact with all creatures except for their brethren at Winter Nest, and the citizens of New Kurn. The aarakocra of Winter Nest can tell that their Ice Perch cousins have some secret, but the Silvaarak have a culture that respects the boundaries of those that one trusts. The Ice Perch Silvaarak say that they cannot share certain information, so their brethren in Winter Nest leave the question alone and stay away from Ice Perch territory. Even the young of Winter Nest who journey to seek their visions will avoid Orohna Valley and New Kurn, which happen to fall within Ice Perch territory.

## **The South Guard - Fort Mudwatch Complex**

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On the coast of the Silt Sea, east of the unclaimed plains, lies the South Guard's fortress complex. South Guard is part of Daskinor's domain. A massive retractable bridge connects the village to Crodlu Island, the first and southernmost of the islands of the Dim Lands. The bridge crosses directly into Fort Mudwatch, which forms the eastern part of one enormous slave-labor complex.

Daskinor's fortresses, secure compounds, retractable bridges, and other fortifications cut the Dim Lands off from intruders and also serve to supervise the forced labor of thousands of slaves. The fortress and farming compound of South Guard is on the mainland. Eldaarich's holdings also include the Dim Islands and the Huuros Islands (a nearby mountainous island chain). Daskinor also claims a large swathe of the coast, but his templars realize that they cannot maintain this claim. Attempts at settlements beyond the South Guard compound have never survived longer than a year - the yearly trin swarms destroy all but the most heavily fortified settlements.

South Guard stands on the mainland coast and guards the retractable bridge from the mainland to Crodlu Island. Fort Mudwatch stands immediately on the other side of the 4-mile-long bridge. South Guard's contingent includes 600 battle-hardened Shtas soldiers,

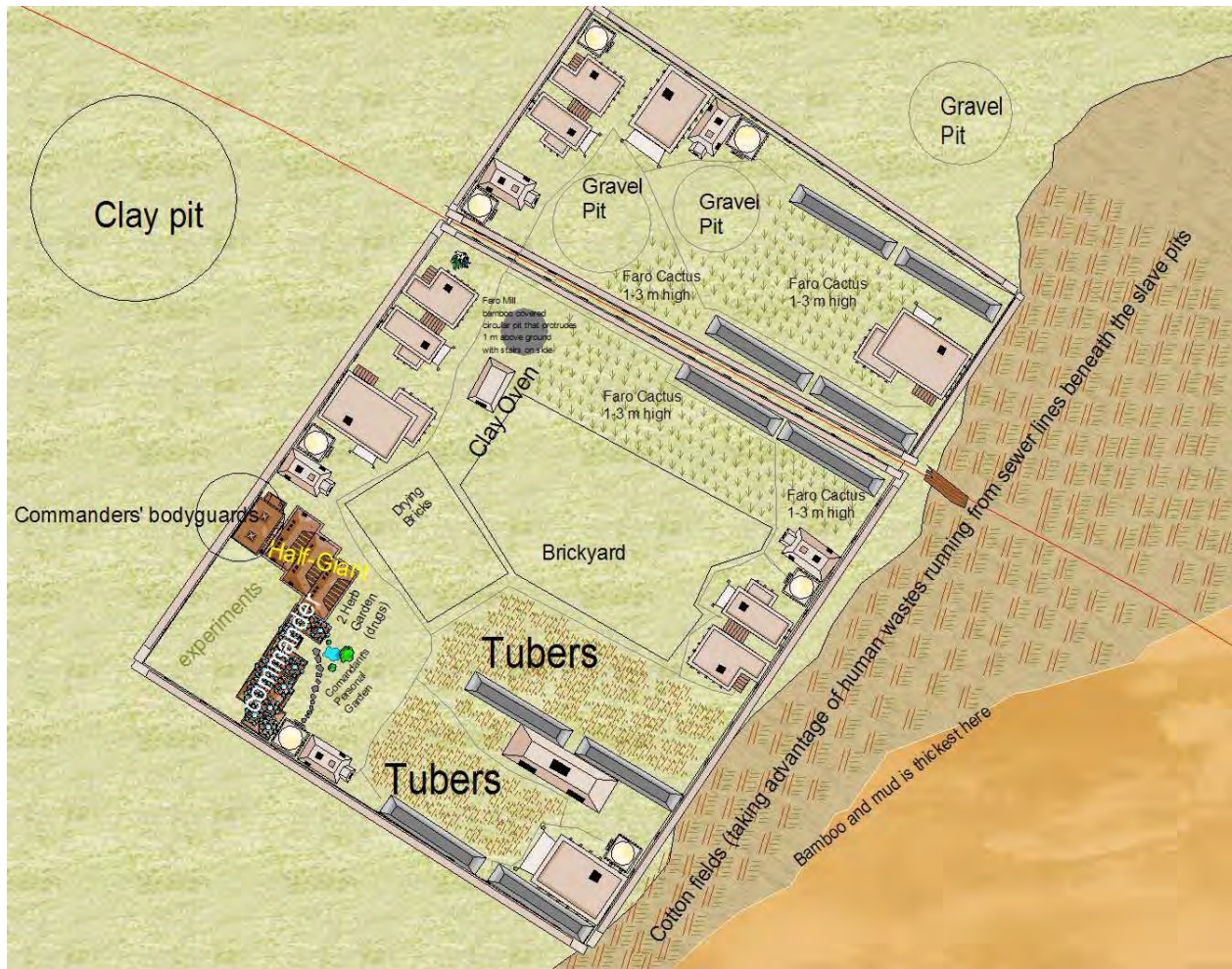
200 half-giant mamluks, hundreds of conscripts from the Haleban orphanages in Eldaarich, and a few templar officers.

So as not to contaminate the minds of Eldaarish citizens or village slaves, and to prevent spying on lands closer in to Eldaarich, Neshtap leaders attempt to keep all slaves in South Guard if they were captured from the mainland, and to keep captured Dimlanders in Camp Zero. In practice, the Red Guard (as the Neshtap are commonly known) overseers aren't that picky about who they condemn to Camp Zero, and the Shtas likewise bend the rules since South Guard is always short on labor.

The Shtas are brutal and negligent taskmasters, but they are not masters of terror like the Neshtap. The slaves here cultivate and harvest faro, cotton, and nugus cactus. Along the edges of the Sea of Silt, they also harvest bamboo and papyrus. To keep some sort of hope alive, and to reduce the numbers of revolts and escapes, the Shtas duly release slaves after seven years of obedient labor. While most succumb to the long hours laboring through the heat of the day, with insufficient water to quench their thirst or to wet their silters, 40% of the slaves actually survive until release. Keeping this promise does not show Shtas to be softhearted; it has simply proven effective over the



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years to deter revolts and attempted escapes. While the Neshtap would prefer to motivate slaves through judicious use of crucifixions, public burnings, and dismemberments, the Shtas know that if they run low on slaves, they will have to do the work themselves, or the Neshtap will turn their anger on the Shtas overseers.

Dwarven colonists originally settled South Guard after the Cleansing Wars, but Daskinor enslaved the dwarves and took them to Eldaarich itself. Human slaves from the Dim Lands were moved out to the village, rebuilding the low dwarven houses and beginning work on the walls which have surrounded South Guard for King's Ages.

South Guard's original walls were tall and built of solid basalt from the Huuros Islands, but lightning reduced that fortress to rubble. The Shtas have rebuilt South Guard to best defend themselves from the trin without attracting lightning bolts: the walls are thick and 20 feet tall, but made of mud, and the slaves have built stumbling walls around the fortress to keep

attacking trin and kreen from getting a running start for jumps. Some Shtas petty officers mount makeshift bamboo parapets along the sections of the wall that their squadron will occupy, but these structures seem to attract lightning during Windflood season, so the parapets come down soon after the yearly trin threat passes.

The Shtas maintain a constant guard at all walls and towers, while frequent Neshtap patrols ensure that no one is escaping—whether Shtas or slaves. Cotton fields spread out beyond the fort walls, while the area within the walls contains faro cacti, tuber fields, gravel pits, a brickyard, a brick-drying area, and two kilns. Low walls, 5 feet high, keep blown sand off of the crops at the outer edges of South Guard's fields and make it difficult for trin to perform running jumps over the walls.

South Guard largely abducts its slaves from the local Eloy herders. Unlike the village-artisans of the Dim Lands, South Guard's slaves are directly supervised and guarded at all times; 600 Shtas brutes act as

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slavedrivers throughout the day, and another hundred fifty stand guard through the night.

The Shtas governor's mansion is constructed from a curious mix of adobe mud and lightning glass bricks. The commander (Male Human Templar 6 / Defiler 1 / Browncloak 10, NE) conducts cruel experiments on slaves behind his mansion. Most of the subjects are children, the elderly, or those that for some reason or another cannot work effectively.

### **Drinking Water**

On most days, Neshtap crodlu wagons gallop recklessly down the bridge from Fort Mudwatch, filled with tuns (each holding 250 gallons) of drinking water. South Guard's slaves replace the massive water barrels with stacks of bricks and dry barrels filled with grain and other South Guard products (not including the cham which the South Guard commander has smuggled to Eldaarich). Although the mud flats and seasonal rain provide enough mud for South Guard's crops, the only drinkable water comes from Fort Mudwatch. Together, the Shtas and slaves require 10,000 gallons of water every day. Except during Flamesky season, Red Guard allow the Shtas a reserve no greater than 50,000 gallons of water, to drive home the lesson that Shtas lives depend on the whim of the Neshtap. During the last days of Fruitbirth and the early days of Flamesky, the Neshtap drastically increase their water shipments to build up a water reserve of 750,000 gallons, in case of a trin attack so large that the daily water shipments fail.

Most Shtas templars use *purify water* to create personal water stashes, which they hide carefully and tell no one about, especially other Shtas guards.

### **South Guard's "Camps"**

Southguard keeps its five thousand slaves housed in long narrow trenches, each 30 feet wide, 40 feet deep, over 1000 feet long, and extremely crowded. The crowding gets even worse during Windflood, Fruitbirth, and Flamesky seasons, when the Shtas force the slaves to vacate one of the trenches to make room for cattle. A makeshift bamboo covering shelters the slaves from the elements during their few hours of sleep. South Guard contains ten such trenches, and the Shtas refer to each trench group as a separate "camp," i.e. "camp one," "camp two," etc.

To prevent rebellion, the Shtas ban the slaves from speaking to each other across camps, and the Red

Guards prohibit the Shtas from mixing the camps in work projects. The Shtas break this policy when they deem it necessary, unless the Red Guards are watching. South Guard's current governor has attempted to enforce the rule by dividing the guards into separate groups, each governing a separate camp, and assigned separate tasks to each camp. The resulting competition successfully discouraged Shtas units from sharing slaves, but the competitive policy has also created some unexpected consequences, such as midnight raids of one camp by another camp's guards.

A cruel taskmaster named Egzik (Human Male Templar 5 / Browncloak 7, LE), and his cadre of 80 foremen and slavedrivers rule over Camp One. Egzik tends to walk around bare-chested because he likes to show off his remarkable tattoo of three beautiful nude women drowning in a transparent pyramid (it depicts the "crystal pyramid", the most popular form of public execution in Eldaarich). While displaying his sunburnt and tattooed chest, Egzik cloaks his back to cover the scars of lashings, both those that he received from his childhood in the Haleban orphanage and the ones he still receives when his camp runs below quota. As a child, Egzik was told by a cruel Haleban orphanage master that the Neshtap had taken Egzik's twin brother when he was one year old but had rejected Egzik himself for being too sickly and "elflike." Egzik looks nothing at all like an elf, and (to an even greater extent than the typical Eldaarish thug) loathes elves and half-elves. Unlike other Shtas, Egzik secretly idolizes the Red Guard, and takes every opportunity he finds to try (unsuccessfully) to ingratiate himself with these silent masked terrors.

Egzik takes care that his unreasonable demands and sadistic punishments do not ruin any of his most productive slaves; when one of his "producers" becomes uncooperative or otherwise needs "motivation," Egzik tends to punish or threaten the life of a friend or lover of the producing slave. Egzik offers no such protection for most slaves under his stewardship, but lets his subordinates motivate them as they see necessary. Egzik takes greater care than other camp taskmasters to cull the sick, young children, and other less productive slaves, reasoning that they take up food and water. If a slave is identified as less productive, then unless that slave somehow becomes a close friend to one of Egzik's favorite highly productive slaves, Egzik will probably pull the underproducer from the pens to die for the amusement of his men.

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Egzik is no fool and shows more creativity than most camp taskmasters. He knows his lunar calendar and keeps his camp on an irregular schedule, sleeping during the day and working at night when the moons give sufficient light, in order to economize on water. Camp One is charged with operating South Guard's brickyards. This breaks down into a number of separate tasks that Egzik classifies as full moon projects or half-moon projects, depending on how much light his subordinates will need to keep the slaves from escaping. "Full moon tasks" include the rebuilding of broken walls and work outside the gates of South Guard, such as digging up clay for brick-work in clay pits outside the gates and gathering dried plant matter to serve as straw, and gathering dung and softwood to serve as fuel. "Half-moon tasks" include mixing mud and straw, forming the bricks with molds, removing the bricks from molds to dry in the sun, and baking the bricks in the kiln. Some tasks can only be done in daylight, such as using different sand colors to make the different colors of brick required by the Red Guards. Sands extracted from the mud quarry are baked into light blue bricks. Red bricks for the Neshtap

buildings include red sands from the Chk'kun desert area, a wash of ochre-colored sand along the coast north of Eldaarich.

Because of Egzik's policy of working in moonlight when possible, the slaves of Camp One are more hydrated than those of the other camps. Despite Egzik's sadism and his policy of "culling the weak," 60% of his slaves survive their full seven years, compared to 40% in the other camps.

Officially, the other nine camps are involved in more agricultural work, growing edible tubers and cotton. Unofficially, all of the camps, including Camp One, periodically lend slaves to the Red Guard for various projects on the bridge and in Fort Mudwatch, and also lend slaves to the governor's pet projects. Fortunately, most of the governor's projects do not involve sadistic experiments. Most involve gathering, cultivating, and processing various herbs to make the assortment of addictive recreational drugs sold in Eldaarich.



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### **Defenses**

The Shtas based in South Guard keep watch on the fort's walls and towers, while the Neshtap, based in Fort Mudwatch across the bridge, operate patrols out into the desert and plains beyond. The Red Guards also ensure that the Shtas don't have contact with foreigners other than the slaves in their custody. The Neshtap often use South Guard as a rallying point to launch raids into the Trembling Plains and beyond, including special missions such as sending out spies and launching hunting teams to procure aarakocra and other captives.

The Shtas may be the worst equipped, most poorly trained excuse for a sorcerer-king's army on Athas. Unarmored and underfed, they compensate for their poor morale by consuming some of the inexpensive addictive drugs that their slaves produce. A number of Shtas have thought at some length on how to use the glass and other local materials to their advantage in combat. Without adequate supplies of lumber, however, their options are limited. This has been especially true since the Red Guards caught some of the self-appointed weaponsmiths and burnt them alive – they had tried to make weapons from the near mile of giant's hair rope that makes up part of the underground bridge mechanism. Typical Shtas gear includes broken weapons recovered from battlefields and several weapons of their own make, constructed from the few materials available: sky hammers, improvised swatters, star razors (sometimes called a beggar's chatchka, a coin-sized shard of glass balanced for throwing; treat as a shuriken), tossers (see new weapons in *FFN* for more details), datchi clubs, and slings predominate.

The fort walls have two functioning fixed crossbows and one small working catapult. Lightning has destroyed other weapons situated atop the walls.

No one outside the fort is aware of the desperate state of defenses at South Guard. Azeth believes that South Guard has a thousand troops, and that all of those troops are like the Red Guard. Some of those who survived slavery in South Guard assume that the Shtas are simply Red Guards out of uniform. After all, South Guard somehow manages to survive the trin waves year after year, despite the fact that so many of the trin can leap over the walls. What saves South Guard from annihilation year after year is not cunning, strategy, or soldiering. Each year, when the battle seems most hopeless and the trin and kreen are overrunning the fortress, a handful of Shtas brutes suddenly stand up and turn the tide. The Shtas calls this the "glorious

miracle of the replaceable heroes," since it is a different handful of soldiers that do this every year – most do not survive their heroism, and those that do cannot remember what happened (see *Wisdom of the Drylanders*, "Wisdom of the Storm Coast").

Shtas templars have studied the matter and believe that there is some sort of combination of the cheap drugs that they give the men that turns them into "replaceable heroes." All they know is that the soldiers who save them are always human and are always warriors or fighters of some sort, never templar officers or defilers. They also tend to be the dullest, most inattentive and hopelessly drugged soldiers of the community. But increasing drug doses has not led to a larger number of replaceable heroes, and the templars remain mystified.

The full answer to this mystery lies in the Temple of the Founders in the city of Eldaarich itself. Each year, a number of wraiths travel from Eldaarich to South Guard and take possession of the bodies of those human Shtas soldiers who seem least likely to resist them. These wraiths fought in the Cleansing Wars under Daskinor and they have no interest in possessing the bodies of non-humans or "half-breeds" if human bodies are available.

The wraiths arrive on time because the trin attacks are a regular occurrence. In the past, when Eldaarich has attacked Kurn, the Founders (as the wraiths call themselves) possessed Shtas or villagers in order to attack Kurnan outposts. A wraith-possessed body continues fighting after its host is dead, persisting until the host's body is cut to ribbons, at which point the wraith either attacks in its incorporeal form or takes possession of another body. Some Shtas officers possess the ability to summon the Founders, but they cannot command them.

### **Retractable Bridges**

When he settled his Cleansing War army - the Mountain Men - in the Dim Islands, Daskinor summoned powerful air elemental spirits to link his islands together and to the mainland. As a reward, Daskinor promised to build a great Air temple in Eldaarich. Eager for formal worship, the elementals agreed, since the Mountain Men had always worshiped spirits of the mountain winds. But after Daskinor announced the Wind temple's construction, the Mountain Men's enthusiasm alarmed him. Concerned that a powerful Air cult would weaken his

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authority, Daskinor imprisoned the elementals in large white gems when the bridges were finished. These gems, kept in a vault deep in The Stone (Daskinor's fortress-palace in Eldaarich), are called the *eyes of the clouds*; the elementals remain imprisoned within them to this day.

Each bridge contains a 200-foot retractable section at both ends. Daskinor carelessly told the air elementals to make *each* end of each bridge retractable, not realizing until after he'd betrayed the elementals that the design allowed his enemies to seal him in.

The retractable "tongue" of each bridge extends from an enormous underground mechanism that involves dozens of pulleys and over twenty thousand feet of giant's hair rope. Extending the bridge tongue over the rollers requires the labor of driks, mekillots, or at least a hundred persons, and takes at least an hour. However, because the bridge tongue extends at an upward angle, all it takes is a pull of a lever in one of the watchtowers, and the entire 400-foot stone tongue rolls back into the mechanism beneath the fort. Anyone standing on that portion of the bridge when it retracted

would probably be either knocked into the silt or ground into bone meal where the tongue retracts into the cliff face.

Daskinor's templars have jammed and buried the mechanisms on the west side of each bridge, but if one were to tunnel into one of the western gate machines, simply removing the 8-ton stone that holds the western tongue in place would cause it to roll back into the mechanism, withdrawing the bridge.

### **Fort Mudwatch**

In contrast to their Shtas counterparts across the bridge at South Guard, the Red Guard at Fort Mudwatch have few concerns about their own survival. While South Guard has often been overrun and rebuilt, no force has ever posed a serious threat to Fort Mudwatch. The bridge between Fort Mudwatch and South Guard, commonly known as Southbridge or Mudbridge, has remained continuously open for thirty years. The last time the Mudbridge's western tongue was retracted, a few nimble trin had lept onto the stone ledge above

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where the tongue slides into the cliff face; the Red Guards simply respond by dropping the drawbridge, effectively using it as a flyswatter.

Large snake-like towers rise from the silt along the bridge, creating additional archer posts. The Red Guards access the towers from tunnels beneath Fort Mudwatch and the tunnels do not extend all the way to the mainland. Overconfidence may be the greatest threat to Mudwatch's security. Confident in the fort's defenses, the Red Guards usually bring boys as young as seven years old to man the archers' posts on the walls and snake towers, in order to build their confidence as future Red Guards and give them some feel of "battle experience."

While the Neshtap have other forts, Mudwatch is their home base. Situated on Crodlu Island, it overlooks the Southbridge and Camp Zero. In Fort Mudwatch, baby boys are raised to become Red Guards, and instilled with Neshtap values such as respect for plant life and fire, empathy for crodlu, and sadistic cruelty towards every other creature on Athas. The Neshtap also stockpile what food they can from South Guard in a group of large granaries.

At the top of the cliffs, above Camp Zero's "mud quarry," the mud runs down a channel to a complex of sealed black stone buildings beneath Fort Mudwatch. The task of extracting water from the mud involves specialized skills such as alchemy; in every generation, a small group of Neshtap are trained to take over this work. The Neshtap use the extracted water for themselves, their mounts, the villagers of the Dim Lands, and the Shtas contingent at South Guard. Other city-states usually use templar magic for this sort of process, but since Daskinor requires the Neshtap (and most of the other orders) to justify all templar spellcasting in writing to the Savak, the Neshtap avoid relying on Daskinor's spells when they can.

### **Camp Zero**

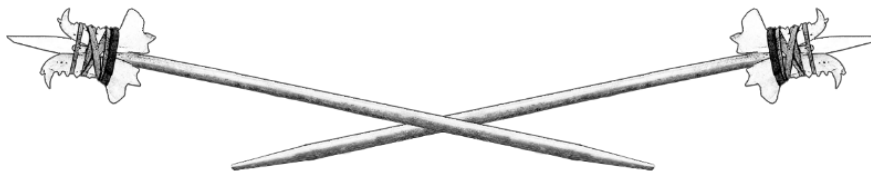
When the Neshtap capture and enslave Eldaarish citizens or wanderers in the Dim Lands, they usually send them to the "mud quarry," an inescapable cove

situated below the level of the silt. Camp Zero sits at the bottom of a coastal cliff beneath Fort Mudwatch on Crodlu Island. The villagers here barely look human because of the covering of thick mud that they have no means of removing. In exchange for the backbreaking labor of scooping buckets of mud from the silt and pulleying the mud to the top of the cliffs, the villagers receive food, fresh water, and damp cloth to use as silters. The water extracted from the mud has a bitter taste and a light blue color. The Neshtap alchemists realize that the water contains traces of copper, but the Red Guards have no interest in turning Camp Zero into a copper mine, since they believe that such a mine on the site would cause them to lose their primary water source.

Camp Zero is the only camp in the Dim Islands where foreigners, Dimlanders, and Eldaarish workers are placed together. The mud pulley itself is manned by a group of pitiful creatures that the Neshtap refer to gleefully as "giant halves": giants whose legs have been amputated to prevent them from escaping. Descended from silt giant raiders that the Neshtap captured generations ago, these unfortunate creatures have the head, trunk and arms of a squid-head giant, but no legs. The Red Guards amputate these giants' legs at the hip shortly after they are born, both to keep them from escaping into the silt and also to reduce their need for food and water. The Neshtap periodically descend by rope ladder to help the giant halves to breed, because the operation would not survive without them. Pulleying the mud to the top of the cliffs requires the giants' strength, and Camp Zero provides most of the water for the various forts and slave camps of the Dim Lands; Eldaarich itself scarcely gets by on its own wells.

### **Beyond Fort Mudwatch**

Besides the camps mentioned above, Crodlu Island has several other slave camps farther away from Fort Mudwatch. The road eventually passes across another retractable bridge to the island of Czel Undrazig, where the city-state of Eldaarich sits in the crater of an extinct volcano.



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# Chapter Six: The People of the Trembling Plains

*"The relationship between the nomadic Eloy herders and their elven kin is a cruel and unfair one. An elven poet once compared their relationship to that of the tumbleweed and the wind: the wind picks up the tumbleweed and carries it for a while, but the tumbleweed cannot keep up, and the wind eventually leaves it behind. Hence, the part-elven herder clans of the Trembling Plains are known as the Eloy Eva'a, which is Elvish for "the Tumbleweed Chasers," or literally, "the Clans of the Tumbleweed-chasing Tribe." The name stuck, partly because the herders actually do resemble the rolling wind-blown bushes when dressed up in their three-season cloak camouflage and partly because they have no other name or common tribal organization to unite them. Those that do not speak Elvish often do not understand the joke, and simply refer to the people as the Eloy."*

- Calnis Rifak, Templar of New Kurn

Three themes dominate life in the Trembling Plains: survival, herding, and trade. Most of the denizens of the Trembling Plains dwell in tents and beneath the stars, at least for most of the year.

## The Eloy

Most of the nomadic herders of the Trembling Plains descend from Kurnans and Eldaarish citizens who fled their cities when their kings began to gather tribute for the Dragon. Since then, they have intermarried with local elven tribes. Those who can run with the elves usually do so, forgetting those they have left behind. Other Eloy feel the same wanderlust that affects the elven people, the urge to run across open spaces, but most lack the ability to act on it. Many try to run with the elves, only to limp back to their Eloy clan after the elves leave them behind.

Nearly every herder knows a friend or has a relative that married an elf, and most Eloy show visible signs of some elvish ancestry. The marriages between Eloy and elven tribe members are either very brief or seasonal marriages; when the tribe moves on, the elf, usually the male, picks up and leaves his spouse who, not being elven, cannot keep up. Elves believe the non-elven spouses belong with their own people anyway and so see this as the natural way of things. Many elves consider it remarkable fidelity if the husband returns every year, to visit with his wife and child for a season, if he can find where their herds are grazing. Though the elf-human marriages are seldom happy, and are often tragic, the Eloy treat their half-elven cousins as the same as any other herder of their respective clans. Their "elfish" blood helps the Eloy survive living outdoors in a climate where temperatures range from blazing to freezing.

## Life and Society

### Religion

Like the other peoples that frequent the Trembling Plains, most Eloy worship elemental Air. Air priests from the Tablelands often express alienation from the consistent and invariable traditions of the Trembling Plains' wind cults, and question whether these Eloy truly worship elemental Air. The truth is that to those who have studied the region's inherent complexity, the winds of the Trembling Plains are as predictable as sunrise and sunset. Whereas "swearing by the winds" in the Tablelands is almost synonymous with

oathbreaking, most Eloy would take such an oath very seriously. Most of the people that interact and intermarry with the Eloy also worship elemental Air: the aarakocra of Winter Nest, the Sons of the Free, House Azeth, and most of the Eldaarish refugees that usually assimilate into the Trembling Plains by becoming slaves of the Eloy. Nowhere else in the known world does worship of a single element dominate across such a vast area.



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### **Eloy Culture**

The Eloy have an extensive oral tradition of passing on their history and a love of telling and hearing stories about places both near and far — the bandit states, Kurn, Eldaarich, and even the Tablelands. They do not regard information as a commodity, but as something that is shared as a friendly gesture. Once the Eloy begin telling stories, they often try to outdo each other with impressive stories of places and things they have seen.

Strangely, they seldom invent these stories — at least not deliberately. Since they rarely show themselves to strangers, the Eloy “learn” many of their stories by eavesdropping on strangers on the road. Eloy tend to make significant creative inferences as they fill in the blanks but they do not tell stories that they know to be false; the quickest way to anger an Eloy is to call them a liar.

Although they are masters of hiding, even passing their communications off as the sounds of birds and insects, once they allow themselves to be seen they are very blunt in their communications and eager to hear stories of the wider world.

Their story-sharing tradition gives the Eloy detailed accounts of the events and happenings in other lands, but these accounts are not necessarily accurate and are rarely up to date. When an unverifiable but interesting story comes along, herders tend to pass it on as if it were true, until contrary evidence or more interesting and believable stories conflict with the first one. While there are a few in every tribe that read and write picts, the Eloy are a poor people who rely on their oral history to preserve their peoples’ knowledge. While curious about other places and people, the Eloy are very much focused on the task of maintaining their livelihood. When talking about “things of consequence”, the Eloy can rattle off extensive and uncanny knowledge of information such as the location of water holes, animal health, caravan schedules, wind and weather patterns, or the price of Kurnan leather goods during Windflood season.

### **Language**

The Eloy dialect mingles words from Kurnan, Eldaarish, Common, and Elven. Unlike the Kurnans and Dimlanders, most herders do speak a little “Drylandish” (the Common tongue) but the herder rendition of the Common tongue takes some getting used to.

*Herder: Say! Drajan! Look for my brother. He pass you one hour before now?*

*Draji: No, I have not seen any humans on this road all morning. Just a couple of stray elves.*

*Herder: My brother is elfish.*

*Draji: Your brother is an elf?*

*Herder: No not elf, not elven, elfish! Half-human. No ... Part human. Say! You need change how you say “elf” or you find no friends in these northish parts.*

### **Writing**

Many peoples in and around the Trembling Plains - including the Eloy, Kurnans, members of House Azeth, and of course the Eldaarish - use an ideographic writing system known as “picts”, where a single symbol corresponds to an idea. The use of picts originated in Eldaarich, but their use soon spread throughout the region. Few Eloy can write more than a handful of picts, but nearly all of them can recognize and understand a large number of picts that they have encountered before. By contrast, Eldaarich forbids writing to non-templars (though it allows anyone to read), and nearly all Kurnan citizens and members of House Azeth can write using picts.

While the cities of Kurn and Eldaarich do not forbid reading in any form, few residents of the Trembling Plains region - particularly the Eloy - can read any of the forms of writing common in the Tablelands, simply out of a lack of experience with them. Indeed, many Eloy who recognize such writing tend to call it “dwarf-script” because dwarven herders and Kurnan dwarves are the only locals who commonly use that form of writing.

### **Names**

**Eloy Names:** Eloy names are a mix of Kurnan, Eldaarish, Elven, Draji, Dwarven, and Common-language names from the Tablelands:

*Female Names:* A’ina, Amunet, A’anat, Anippe, A’uset, Eshe, Chaklia, Chione, Ixtlappe, Jamila, Halima, Hasina, Haqikah, Kamilah, La’atle, Ma’ibe, Me’ana, Mesi, Moswen, Muka, Mutara, Neema, Pnasta, Rabiah, Ramla, Sagira, Selma, Tabia, Tlana.

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*Male Names:* Amdróflak, Frágas, Hapi, Het, Ishaq, Jendayi, Keth, Gesabh, Lapis, Ma'an, Neith, Nethken, Náthgost, Notheelss, Nrek, Olufemi, Oseye, Perznat Ptareg, Oyonnax, Qayanip, Ragasz, Shezed, Tlexka. Tarik, Yadjs, Zhabrihzh, Zwosta.

An Eloy's full name consists of their given name, and the name of his or her clan. When a herder identifies themselves to distrusted strangers, they only give their clan's name. Matriarchs and patriarchs will identify themselves only with their given name, because their name *is* the name of the clan. The clan takes the name of its current living patriarch or matriarch. Childrens' and slaves' names indicate that the clan possesses them.

For example, someone named A'ina who was a child or slave within Ishaq's clan would introduce herself as A'ina of Ishaq, but to strangers she would simply say, "I am of Ishaq." If A'ina were accepted into Ishaq's clan, she would introduce herself as A'ina Ishaqscan. To people she did not trust, she would introduce herself as Ishaqscan. If Ishaq died, and Neith became the new patriarch, A'ina's name would become "A'ina Neithscan." And if A'ina were to become the matriarch of her clan, she would simply say, "I am A'ina."

### **Typical Phrases in the Trembling Plains:**

"I swear by the winds ..." generally the most serious and binding oath that one can make in the Trembling Plains. A few rascals claim that the advent of a Tyr-storm voids any oath that was made by the winds, but the Air clerics almost unanimously disavow this heresy.

"... and the Dragon is coming." This phrase punctuates the end of almost any list of problems or obstacles. Example: "It's been a hard season. My husband broke his leg, I miscarried again, our best egg-layer became sterile, and the Dragon is coming." It has been nearly 2000 years since the Dragon last appeared in the Trembling Plains, but the inhabitants have not forgotten it, nor do they believe the "ridiculous Drylander stories" that claim that the Dragon is dead.

"Go climb a mountain." The White Mountains are visible from most of the northern Trembling Plains, but no one goes there – the slopes are too sheer, the weather bitterly cold, and the air too thin, to say nothing of terrifying creatures seen on the distant winds. Largely because of these creatures, the mountains are viewed by many as protected places of Air, as well. "Guide you to South Guard? Go climb a mountain, Drylander."

"Fast as a pack of kreen." Most herders have seen the trin migrations and confuse "trin" with "kreen". Anything that will happen too quickly to be remedied or that is simply beyond remedy, may be described this way. "You watch, that Listrac girl, she'll bed one of those elves fast as a pack of kreen."

"Bad luck." Mostly an Eldaarish concept but influences the herders as well ... if someone has "bad luck," then it's unlucky for a weak person to try to help the unlucky person.

## **Economy**

### **Money and Property**

The Eloy avoid using any type of coin when they can, and particularly refuse to carry silver or gold in the Trembling Plains. Likewise, they shun fine clothing, metal weapons, expensive gems, or any lightweight highly valuable item that would make their clan a

target for bandits. If they encounter such items, they tend to bury it away from their own grazing lands, and sometimes wait years or decades scheming on how to carry it to Kurn or Azeth's Rest without endangering themselves or their kin, to convert it into a more practical form of property: medicines, tents, saddlebags, high quality bone weapons, etc.

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Nearly all of the Eloy herders' regular cattle are medium or small creatures, with sygra being the most commonly kept by them. The Eloy capture mekillots and inix for sale, but rarely keep them for more than a few weeks.

### **Personal and Clan Property**

Within an Eloy clan, all of what the herders consider to be "true wealth" – the wells and the cattle - belongs to the patriarch or matriarch of the clan, who assigns such property for the good of the tribe. Except in the few clans dominated by thrallherds, the patriarch does not claim the personal property of clan members.

The Eloy make crude cisterns where possible, at least a mile off the road, and heavily camouflaged in order to hide them from others and keep the water for as long as possible after the rains. Travelers can find them with a careful search.

### **Trade**

Trade and barter are the most common means of exchange within the Eloy herding clans. If one clan of herders lacks an item they cannot produce on their own, they will often resort to bartering with other clans or the infrequent merchants who travel to the north. Most clans, as a necessity of living upon the Trembling Plains, are relatively self-sufficient in terms of their ability to produce the basic staples of life that they need to survive.

The Eloy do have a weakness for some of the luxury items produced in the south and in the nearby city-state of Kurn. Trade is not just about easing a few discomforts of life upon the Trembling Plains, it is also a necessity for survival. The herder clans require shelter within Azeth's Rest or Kurn during the 75 days of Flamesky each year when feral trin rampage through the plains. Without this shelter, life would go on, but fewer herders would survive and the few little luxuries of herders' lives would be gone. The herders value these settlements, and the opportunities for both shelter and trade they provide, and deeply hate the nearby Bandit States for endangering the trade that is

the life's blood of their people. Herders find it safest and most convenient to sell their herds to House Azeth or to Kurn every year during Flamesky, when they are sheltering from the trin migration. Unfortunately for the Eloy, since all the other clans have the same idea, this practice drives livestock prices down to absurdly low levels during Flamesky.

Strong, ambitious, or foolhardy Eloy clans sometimes venture south to Draj or to Ket, where they can get considerably better prices for their herds. Most herders avoid this journey, however, since it takes them far out of their element into the "dry lands", where people's ideas about honest business practices are frighteningly different. Additionally, Drylanders typically pay in hard coin, which has little appeal to the herders, who realize that carrying such things simply make the clan a target for bandits. Merchants and traders within the city-state of Kurn, on the other hand, have adopted specialized trading emporiums that are specifically set up to deal with the large influx of livestock bartering. These merchants are able to provide the herders with those things they need, such as high-quality tools and weapons, fire-resistant cloth tents, cistern fiend younglings, high quality running boots and armor, and medicines of both the mundane and magical varieties.

### **Water**

Wells in the Trembling Plains are seasonal, unreliable water sources. Therefore, the herders of the plains build and maintain hidden cisterns all over the lands in which they graze their livestock. These hidden deposits of water usually fill during Windflood and the herders are careful with this precious liquid, stretching its use out to ensure their herds make it through the other seasons. Purchase of ceramic tiles to make these cisterns is one of the rare uses herders have for money. Although nomadic, the herders consider the wells their own property and resent strangers knowing about them. To enforce the ethic that one leaves others' cisterns alone, some tribes resort to making deliberately poisoned cisterns or use herbs to make cisterns of good water look and smell tainted. Many interclan wars have arisen from the question of who owns which well after a clan leader dies and their clan splinters off.

## Law and Order

*The people of the Trembling Plains tolerate no kind of stealing that involves a breach of trust. Theft between clan members, theft between guest and host, or theft between guests of the same host — all of these involve a contemptible breach of trust. Within the walls of Azeth's Rest, all invited persons are guests of House Azeth and have a duty not to steal from each other while guests. But if a theft occurred outside any duty of trust, then the Eloy and House Azeth itself consider it no crime, unless the thief "breaches the peace" by using violence or threat.*

*In Azeth's Rest, the elven chief who stole your saddle boasts to the crowd of how he took it from you two days ago on the plains while you weren't looking. The wise response is to praise the elf for his skill and ask him if his heart is as generous as his fingers are nimble, meaning that you'd like to buy your saddle back at a reasonable price. Any attempt to take raided goods by force within Azeth's walls would be considered a breach of the peace, although Azeth officers will initially be patient with "Drylanders that do not understand the ways of the Trembling Plains."*

*As you may imagine, this northern tradition sometimes collides violently with the Draji attitude towards thievery...*

- Trenbull, in a letter to his superiors in House M'ke

Each Eloy matriarch or patriarch sets the law of the clan. Some are autocratic, while some write their laws down and pass them from generation to generation, even though the name and composition of the clan changes.

There are some traditions that transcend the individual clans: most people of the Trembling Plains (including Eloy, Kurnans, members and friends of House Azeth, as well as the local elven, tari, terek, and plains giants tribes) draw fine distinctions that do not exist in most other regions. These distinctions, along with other rules, constitute what many people call "The Code of the Trembling Plains."

### The Code of the Trembling Plains

#### Preserving and Defiling

It is no coincidence that the Eloy's herding lands are relatively fertile compared to the rest of Athas. The Eloy know the difference between preserving and defiling magic, and kill defilers whenever possible or pass on the information to others - usually Kurnan patrols - for those defilers the Eloy are no match for.

#### Use of Poisons

The people of the Trembling Plains consider venoms (i.e., injury poisons) honorable because anyone can see what you smear on your blade and because anyone but a fool knows to expect danger from a drawn blade or knocked arrow. On the other hand, bringing other types of poisons (non-injury types such as ingested or contact) into a fort, camp, or city without permission of the persons in charge is a terrible crime and, in some situations, an act of war as well.

#### Raiding and Banditry

Outside their own or known friends' camps or homes, the people of the Trembling Plains expect people to be vigilant over their herds and belongings. Taking advantage of careless people is a gentle means of teaching them to be more careful. Legitimate raiders do not use lethal force except in response to lethal force. A bandit is someone willing to kill to steal; while a raider is just someone who artfully steals property from owners that weren't paying proper attention to it. The Eloy have found that Drylanders have a different notion, due in part to witnessing the gory ends of several of their people upon the bloody sacrificial altars of the Two Moon city.

A successful raid builds prestige and the defender can gain face by capturing would-be raiders and holding them for ransom. Once a raider accepts mercy from their captor, they are honor-bound to wait for ransoming. If no ransom arrives, the hostage becomes a slave because the hostage's own people have declined to buy them back. Such slaves serve for a year and a day, and then are free. If the raid damaged property or inadvertently harmed persons, then it is

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possible that the would-be raider will end up as a slave for up to seven years, but no longer. If the clan determines that the outsider intentionally harmed or killed members of their clan, then they have no qualms about killing the perpetrator, but might be persuaded otherwise for the proper ransom, since killing a member of another clan is often cause for war.

### **Slavery in the Trembling Plains**

The view of slavery within the Trembling Plains differs dramatically from that of the Tablelands, where people are bought and sold like chattel, brutalized, and worked to death or simply killed for little or no reason. To the people of the Trembling Plains, such a way is unimaginable - enslaving a creature is usually a method to rectify a wrong. They, in fact, see it as a form of mercy, allowing the wrongdoer to compensate those that he wronged, rather than suffering simpler and more brutal forms of justice. Slaves are usually acquired from botched raids or from the small clan wars that erupt between the Eloy.

Most clans of the Trembling Plains will not force "prisoners of war" to serve more than a year and a day. However, to atone for a more heinous crime, repay a debt, fulfill a contract, or restore a wrong, any clan can require a slave to serve the full seven years. Even slavery requires a degree of trust - the Eloy herders will not enslave someone that they believe to be dangerous and dishonorable, nor will they take the freedom from another for more than seven years, which in their eyes would be an offense against the winds. Not all slaves are failed raiders or the spoils of war.

There are some slaves in the Trembling Plains that enter into a type of indentured slavery voluntarily. At the end of the agreed term of such service, the slave must be paid (usually in herd animals), unless a clan leader offers adoption into the clan and the newly freed slave accepts, which most often happens. A slave can, however, refuse the offer to join a clan and require payment. Those who refuse tend to try and return to their old clan, possibly due to the existence of a spouse, child, or other such situation.

### **Justice and Mercy**

Persons who have committed intentional crimes against life - such as professional slavers, defilers, rapists, and bandits - are viewed as not worthy of any form of mercy and are usually slain when discovered. Any other criminal is given a chance to plead for mercy to the matriarch or patriarch of the clan, or the one who

*An exceptionally merciful herder clan once attempted to hold captured bandits for ransom. The bandit clans responded by capturing herders from the captor's clan, and then offered a prisoner exchange.*

- Wisdom of the Trembling Plains, by Spymaster Annippe, in Wisdom of the Drylanders, the Kurnan spy manual.

they have committed a crime against. No criminal ever receives mercy unless someone is willing to accept them as a slave. Since few people are willing to take responsibility for a dangerously violent criminal, the clan leader usually declines the appeal for mercy, and the clan will "let the winds decide," a method that involves hanging the criminal.

No clan leader lightly passes judgment when a controversy involves members of two different herder clans, or between a herder clan and a citizen, child, or slave of another society that the clans respect, such as Kurn, House Azeth, or an elven tribe. In such situations, clan leaders will seek out some leader or representative of the foreign persons involved in the dispute and attempt to resolve the issue through mediation. In some cases, negotiations are not formally necessary; an aggrieved clan that has captured a raider, for example, will simply send a ransom demand to the raider's clan. If the raider's clan does not pay the ransom, then the aggrieved clan can hold the raider as a slave for up to seven years as compensation.

### **Sworn to the Winds**

In the Trembling Plains, ordinary oaths, contracts, and obligations, including a contract or obligation that makes someone a slave, have no legal effect beyond seven years. Under certain conditions, however, two or more Air priests can bind parties to a lifelong contract known as a "covenant." Each priest represents one of the parties to the contract and determines whether the person that they represent is sincere in wishing to enter the covenant.

People often "swear by the winds" to the terms of a contract or promise. Eloy consider this a most solemn oath, but unless performed by the wind priests, it has no binding effect beyond seven years.

### **Marriage**

The most common covenant in the Trembling Plains is that of marriage, and like other covenants, it requires the benediction of two Air priests. Like House Azeth,

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the herders expect to only marry once in their lives and are usually monogamous, but clan leaders act as “proxy spouse” for all of the clan’s widows, and parent to all of the clan’s orphans. Upon a clan leader’s death, many clans disintegrate into smaller clans, or dissolve completely, with the clan members seeking refuge with other clans. Sometimes these clan breakups result in quarrels over the clan’s wells and animals. The clan leaders have no authority to stop anyone from leaving the clan, and some of the less diplomatic leaders have stepped out of their tent in the morning to find that their entire clan has abandoned them. On the other hand, some of the more persuasive leaders command fanatical loyalty.

Like many elven tribes, herder clans usually admit new members as slaves at first in order to gauge their temperament and commitment to the clan. After the slavery period is over, the clan must pay the former slave for their service or persuade them to join the clan. When the clan leader wants someone to join their clan as a full member, they usually try to arrange a marriage to a member of the clan. To marry a clan member, a non-clan member must either have the blessing of the clan leader or persuade the prospective spouse to leave the clan.

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## Relations with Others

The Kurnans and aarakocra of the north have enough in common with the herders and elven tribes that wander the Trembling plains that the groups coexist within the region peacefully, for the most part.

### Relations with Elves

Many centuries of admixture with the elven tribes of the north has resulted in extensive familial, religious, and cultural ties between the two peoples. Eloy cattle have made their way far and wide thanks to these ties, largely due to the Moon Racers and Far Striders, who are the Eloys’ primary elven trade partners. The Storm Riders and Star Chasers are culturally and religiously the closest with the Eloy, sharing extensive wind rituals with them, though the two tribes frequent different areas of the Trembling Plains. The Eloy clans nearest the Storm Coast deeply respect the wind prophets of the Storm Riders, and consult with members of their tribe whenever possible, providing some of their finest livestock for shared rituals. Far from the coast, the Star Chasers tribe holds what some might call disproportionate influence over the Eloy clans of Hammer’s Head. The Star Chasers are believed to be the leading force of the confederation of Eloy clans in the area, and they are even rumored to have helped broker some sort of mutual defense pact with the plains giants of Giant’s Hollow. Despite a general pity for the slower Eloy, trade between these peoples is often a joyous occasion for all involved, with feasting and drinking sometimes lasting for several days.

Antagonisms between the Eloy and elven tribes are generally rare, but not unheard of, and the Eloy are always cautious with new or unfamiliar elf tribes, such as those of the Tablelands. Notably, the Eloy are often at odds with raider tribes like the Sun Runners and Silt Stalkers, and actively drive off and refuse to have dealings with murderers such as the Night Runners. Among the northern elf tribes, there is only one tribe that has been majorly antagonistic to the Eloy - the Storm Crows. This tribe is known for upholding many stringent ancient elven customs, some of which are said to date back to the Green Age, and are often led by powerful Rain-cleric warlords. Indeed, the Storm Crows are often considered to be elven supremacists. In their quest to reclaim Kurn and establish a new elven kingdom, the Storm Crows frequently steal not just livestock but lives and treasure, raiding the herders for whatever goods they might need, and taking the Eloy and their children as slaves (the only purpose for which the Crows view non-elves as being fit).

### Relations with other Eloy clans

The relationship between herder clans is uncannily similar to the relationship between different elven tribes. They share a common identity with each other and usually take up cause with each other against outsiders, though at times this is only a pretense due to bad blood between certain clans.

It is almost a daily occurrence for clans to raid each others’ cattle, fight over wells, and sometimes go to

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open war with each other. For the most part, this is seen as just the way things are, and they all go about with their lives.

Compared to the apparent timelessness of elf tribes, very few Eloy clans last more than two generations. Inter-marriage from clan to clan is much more frequent, and consequently very few of the herder clans have their own separate dialect. Kurnans have pointed out that, ironically, some of the feuds between herding clans have lasted for far longer than the original clans where the feud began (see “Wisdom of the Trembling Plains,” from *Wisdom of the Drylanders*).

### **Relations with House Azeth**

The Eloy have a great deal in common with the members of House Azeth, and Azeth has proven itself trustworthy over and over again throughout the King’s Ages, and as such the House is well-regarded by the Eloy. Combined with the (limited) shelter that Azeth’s Rest offers during Flamesky, a person would be hard pressed to find an Eloy with a bad word to say about the Azeth. Both House Azeth and the culture of the herders emphasize fair dealing and reciprocal hospitality, leading to a similar relationship as that between the Eloy and friendly tribes of elves. House Azeth frequently hires Eloy as guides, porters, and guards, with the more adventurous among them serving Azeth for many years and traveling far and wide with Azeth caravans. The Eloy make frequent use of Azeth trade goods and greatly respect House Azeth, leading them to treat it as they would a fellow herder clan.

Many Eloy wish to make close ties to House Azeth in order to obtain an entrance token for Azeth’s Rest, and the House reciprocates their friendliness, but the well at Azeth’s Rest produces a finite amount of water. Those that cannot take refuge in Azeth’s Rest during Flamesky tend to leave the Trembling Plains, either taking refuge in Kurn or striking fortified camps in the badlands.

### **Relations with the Kurnans**

The Eloy herding clans maintain cordial but distant relations with the Kurnans. They recognize Kurnan honesty and identify with Kurnan traditions regarding slavery but distrust the Kurnans because of Kurn’s

respect for Oronis. Although nearly 2,000 years have passed, the Eloy have still not forgiven the one once called Keltis for gathering tribute for the Dragon, and his name and the warning to be wary of the Kurnans have been passed down through the generations by the Eloy. Nevertheless, as a necessity of life, the nomadic herders trade with Kurn, and many Eloy take refuge within the walls of Kurn’s Merchant District during the Flamesky season, when the memory of Keltis’ ancient betrayal of their ancestors is a far less imminent and compelling threat than the clear and present danger of the rampaging trin.

### **Relations with Other Nomads**

The Eloy have the most trust for Kurnans (regardless of race) that follow a nomadic lifestyle, particularly the dwarven Kurnan Carruherd Clave, which keeps its carru between Fort Stench and Conak’s Rock, but never ventures more than a few hours travel from one of the forts. Like the dwarven Kipherd Clave, the members of the Carruherd Clave have obtained Kurnan citizenship, pay their taxes, vote, serve in the Kurnan militia, and have won the respect but not the full trust of the largely-human Kurnans. Dwarves that wish to be more closely tied to Kurn tend to join other claves in Kurn or in Fort Stench.

### **Relations with the Dimlanders**

Unlike Oronis, the sorcerer-king of Eldaarich continues to renew the Eloys’ reasons to fear and hate him. The Eldaarish Red Guards raid the herders’ encampments to obtain slaves every season, and at least one person in every Eloy clan bears the lash-marks, brands, and traumatic memories of slavery at South Guard.

Due to the continued clashes and deep hatred the nomadic herders bear for those of Eldaarich, most clans hesitate to take any Eldaarish or other Dimlander refugees as their own slaves. There are of course exceptions, and some of the clans will eventually and grudgingly allow the odd Dimlander or Eldaarish slave to marry into the clan, provided that they have proven themselves and have been with the clan for the requisite seven years. However, many of the Eloy regard their gentle form of slavery as too good for the Dimlanders and reject the refugees’ entreaties to be

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allowed to be the Eloys' slaves. Those refugees who are rejected are shown at least a token mercy: the Eloy will give the refugees three days of food and water in exchange for a promise that they will go away and not come back. Any who do return are killed without exception.

### **Relations with the Aarakocra**

Many of the Eloy clans are in a formal state of war with the Silvaarak, and this represents a distinct improvement in the relationship between their two peoples. For King's Ages, the Eloy treated the aarakocra as they would any other predator, killing as many as possible when the aarakocra approached the Eloy herds. At House Azeth's suggestion, however, Eloy clans have begun to wound and capture the Silvaarak when they can, ransoming them back to their tribes. House Azeth communicates with both parties and brokers the hostage negotiations. While other groups might prefer a simple exchange of herder livestock for Silvaarak goods, the Eloy and Silvaarak seem to have settled comfortably into their peculiar system. Silvaarak raid Eloy herds, the Eloy capture some of the Silvaarak, and then the Eloy trade Silvaarak hostages back to their people for Silvaarak goods. While some might see this as a rather confusing compromise, fatalities have actually decreased, and the bloodshed is now minimal during clashes between the two groups.

### **Relations with the Tri-Kreen Packs**

The La'tik-tik kreen share many of the values held by the Eloy, but most people of the Trembling Plains fear and distrust them, because the La'tik-tik look too much like the ravenous "kreen" of the Hinterlands that invade every year. The La'tik-tik often attempt to

explain that most of these invaders are trin rather than thri-kreen, but the distinction is lost on most herders and Kurnans. House Azeth and some of Oronis' Green Brotherhood are beginning to extend friendship to the La'tik-tik, and to consider looking for other packs as allies, but they find it hard to overcome the ancient prejudices of their fellow Kurnans and nearly impossible to get through to most herders. The fact that some other kreen packs (in addition to the trin) kill and eat the herders also puts a damper on kreen-Eloy relations.

### **Relations with the Bandit Tribes**

Herders despise the bandit tribes, but have an uneasy unspoken arrangement with them. Like Tsalaxa and Azeth, the bandits and herders are both vulnerable to each other. If a herder clan provides information on bandit movements to outsiders, and the bandit tribe finds out, any bandit tribe has the ability to completely exterminate that clan. On the other hand, herders could do serious harm to a bandit tribe by stealing their hidden sail carts or poisoning the bandits' hidden water stashes.

While the herders and bandits might seem to have shared enemies in Daskinor's slaving Red Guards, the two groups rarely join together to fight the forces of Eldaarich. Instead, the bandits tend to abandon or betray the Eloy to the Eldaarish Red Guards whenever necessary to save themselves. Yet there is hope that the Eloy must not endure the predations of the bandits and the Neshtap indefinitely. A new belief has emerged among the most recent generations of herders, spurred on by a mysterious wandering figure of unknown origin, that a blessed wind lord will soon emerge to free the clans from all oppression. The wind priests, however, have been strangely silent regarding this prophecy.

## **Defense and Warcraft**

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The Eloy are hard to surprise in their native scrubland and very adept at hiding within it. They tend to graze their herds in an area for three to six days, then pack their tents and travel for a day to another grazing site in order to keep the land from becoming overgrazed. Most clans have seasonal routes that they follow each year. These routes change due to a variety of factors

but they are mainly altered to keep the slavers from Eldaarich and the Tablelands from predicting their routes.

The Eloy face slave raiders that tend to attack from two sides, capturing the women and children in order to use them as hostages, to keep the stronger men and



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women of the clan from fighting too heavily. Eloy clans have adapted to these types of attacks by deploying a sophisticated system of scouts. To warn the other clan members if strangers are approaching, scouts hide in positions up to five miles from an encampment, communicating the approach of impending company via a set of codes that sound like the clicks and noises of the local insects.

Travelers on the roads rarely notice that they are under such observation. Those who travel off the roads without permission might find their camps sabotaged or be attacked by volleys of arrows at night, not realizing that they had wandered into the territory of an Eloy clan.

The Eloy maintain surveillance upon travelers within their lands until they find it convenient and safe to approach or determine that they are a threat. In the

past, after the Eloy had made contact, some travelers tortured and killed groups of Eloy in order to find out the location of the herders' wells. Learning swiftly from this, Eloy who wish to meet with a group of travelers now cleverly time their appearances to occur immediately after the travelers find water, to avoid offering the strangers the same temptation.

To some extent, the Eloy defer to Azeth's judgment as to trustworthiness; if they know that the travelers have entered Azeth's Rest, they are more likely to make contact. Even if they never decide to meet with the travelers, they watch and listen carefully, and they convey information to other Eloy clans, and usually to House Azeth as well. Very few caravans or trade parties manage to arrive at Azeth's Rest before the news of their coming has been conveyed to someone at Azeth's Rest by the Eloy.

## **Adventurers**

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**Barbarians:** Brutes (as members of this class are often known) usually come from the cities, particularly from Eldaarich, where the most timid-seeming person might suddenly burst into a dangerous rage. In the Trembling Plains, brutes often become bandits or find employment among the merchant houses as mercenaries. Brutes adapt well enough to herder life when they set their minds to it, but most herders become rangers rather than brutes. The elven tribes, House Azeth, and the Kurnan military employ multiclassed psychic warrior / brutes as "runners."

In Eldaarich, brutes are much more numerous, from the Orders to the slaves, and even among those people who seem most civilized, nervous, and polite. Brutes make up the majority of the Shtas Order, and substantial percentages of the Kulag and Neshtap Orders. They also make up the majority of the road robbers, cattle herders, and cattle thieves in the Dim Lands.

In Kurn, baazrags, elves, and half-giants are the most common races to have members advance as brutes, often serving in the citizen's militia but rarely in the full-time military. Instead, most have some noncombatant profession, such as membership in the baazrag Water Hauler's Clave.

**Bards:** Bards are common among the herding tribes, but the bards of the Trembling Plains are very different than their counterparts in the Tablelands: a great many bards are lawful, as many in the northern societies

consider a venomed blade to be a perfectly legitimate means of settling a difference of opinion. Among the Eloy, bards often rise high within the social structure of the clan, even becoming clan leaders themselves. House Azeth's leadership is also largely populated by lawful bards, including Corik Azeth himself.

Kurn has an even greater number of bards, particularly lawful and good bards.

Within Eldaarich itself, there are absolutely no elves, and therefore no elven market, and yet Eldaarich has more bards than any other city in the Tablelands and large "shadow markets" where bardic services can be found. Bards cultivate, mix, and sell most of the drugs that pacify and manipulate the masses. Other bards broker black market deals, selling their contacts, skills, and knowledge to the highest bidders. Some bards are entertainers, and some among these even find themselves the center of a cult following, regardless of whether or not the entertainer actually wanted to become the center of a cult. Of course, some bards offer murder services for hire to criminals, vengeful commoners, nobles, and civil orders. Many Eldaarish bards mix the businesses of drugs, performance, and murder in order to amass great wealth.

Bards run all of Eldaarich's underground lounges - warrens carved beneath the city with many exits, where people purchase and use recreational drugs as they listen to music or watch executions, blood sports, and other forms of live (usually violent) entertainment.

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Most importantly, bards populate all seven civil orders of Eldaarich.

Shtas morale officers, all bards, provide drugs that keep the Shtas awake at their posts, quell rebellions, and when war requires sacrifices, help prepare individuals for what the Shtas euphemistically call “replaceable heroes” - when heavily armored individuals charge enemy lines to release poisoned gas.

Some popular Haleban cult leaders are bards, using entertainment, oratory, and drugs to mesmerize the masses, or crafting inspirational writing that captivates believers.

No Kulag vessel sails without a bard morale officer and usually a bard quartermaster as well. Takrit bards procure exotic components and drugs for Daskinor himself and oversee the stock of spell components for all seven orders.

Cheka bards drug their “clients” for interrogation - to enhance their memories, loosen their tongues, and to suppress their mental resistance.

The Savak use bards as information brokers and assassins.

**Clerics:** Eloy clan patriarchs and matriarchs tend to be Air clerics, or failing that, they often at least pretend to receive some special insight “from the winds.” House Azeth is dominated by Air clerics, and most of the elves of the Trembling Plains also worship Air, although the Mirage Makers elf tribe worship the Sun. The Moratuc claim to worship Ash, but sages say that the Moratuc religion is technically a variant of elemental Earth worship.

The Neshtap, Daskinor’s Red Guards, worship Fire, but have no clerics among them. The Eldaarish people still generally honor their ancient mountain winds and occasionally become Air clerics, usually worshipping in secret with a handful of followers. The city of Eldaarich has only one active elemental temple, and that is the Water Temple located near the southern wall. Clerics often become itinerant peddlers to the villages of the Dim Lands.

Kurn, on the other hand, has a disproportionately high number of elemental and paraelemental clerics - the cult of Earth seems particularly strong these days. Most of these clerics are low-level or multi-classed, such as the Earth clerics among Kurn’s most elite soldiers, the Black Brethren - their enduring health contributes to the Earth cult’s popularity. Under Keltis,

elemental Fire had preeminence, but that cult has fallen into disfavor over the King’s Ages.

**Druids:** Inexplicably, druids seem to keep a low profile in the Trembling Plains, possibly because the herders do such a good job guarding against defilers. The Moon Racer elves frequently visit Quraite, a farming village administered by druids located a few days north of Urik and less than a day from the Trembling Plains. This is where the Moon Racers obtain zarneeka, an herb extract that is very popular among Kurnan herbalists.

Eldaarich’s notorious Red Guard includes a number of druids, as does the Gardener’s Clave in Kurn.

**Fighters:** Those warriors who seem honest can find employment with House Azeth or the Dedys Consortium, while dishonest fighters often find their way into a bandit tribe or into House Tsalaxa. Among the herders, single-classed fighters often lack crucial skills necessary for herding upon the Trembling Plains.

**Gladiators:** Gladiatorial combat is virtually unknown in the Trembling Plains or in Kurn, since the idea of slaves killing each other for entertainment has little appeal in herder or Kurnan society. Gladiators in the Trembling Plains tend to be escaped slaves from the Tablelands or from Eldaarich, a select few of whom - those who are able to pass the rigorous magical and psionic tests as well as a lengthy field examination - sometimes become members of Kurn’s elite Black Brotherhood or marry into House Azeth. Others become adventurers or sell their skills to trade houses as muscle. Many of these eventually join one of the Bandit States, or, if they are foolhardy, start their own short-lived bandit ventures within the Trembling Plains themselves.

**Psions:** The closest known psionic training opportunities for those in the Trembling Plains are Nexus to the north and the House of the Mind in Draj.

Nexus is administered by agents of the Order, which is on very bad terms with Daskinor and on even worse terms with Oronis, who knows of their involvement in the death of his protégé Korgunard. Kurn has no psionics academy to speak of and hardly anyone knows that New Kurn exists, let alone that it has schools of the Way. Eldaarich used to have a psionics academy, the Kuchina, but it closed when Daskinor began his purge of people who could use psionics. Most psions in the Trembling Plains have recently escaped from Eldaarich. These tend to be shapers and kineticists because seers and telepaths find it easier to conceal their powers, while egoists and nomads were

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always very rare within Eldaarich. House Tsalaxa and the Savak order like to employ shapers, and House Azeth, Kurn, and the Silvaarak often send kineticists along with their patrols due to their ability to supply heavy firepower in a battle.

**Psychic Warriors:** While rare among the Eloy, psychic warriors are most common among the thri-kreen and among the Silvaarak. When a psychic warrior is found within an Eloy clan, they are most often Eldaarish refugees who have escaped to make a life for themselves with the herders. Many baazrags in Kurn and Azeth's Rest are psychic warriors. Psychic warriors are common among the elven tribes, and among Kurn's Black Brethren.

**Rangers:** The most common class among the Eloy is the ranger, since it possesses many features that greatly aid the clans in guarding herd animals while hiding in natural terrain and keeping one's senses alert to intruders. Rangers also dominate Eldaarich's Red Guard. In Kurn, rangers find a place in Kurn's Green Brotherhood and the Trapper's Clave. The Dedys Consortium continually seeks rangers familiar with the Trembling Plains to guide and scout for their off-road caravans.

**Rogues:** The second most common class among the Eloy are rogues, because many of their class skills lend the herders an edge in protecting their clans or when raiding. The Eloy, particularly those whose territory lies in Hammer's Head, often set numerous traps in the ground and on their wells, so having rogues around to deal with traps is often advantageous.

Rogues can often find employment with House Tsalaxa or join one of the Bandit States. Many Kurnan artisans take the rogue class, although they more often become experts or bards. In Eldaarich, many rogues become Kulag sailors or find employment with the secret police, the Savak.

**Templars:** Among the Eloy clans, there are no templars whose monarch is still alive. Templars from Kurn, Eldaarich, and sometimes even Draji and Raam make their way into the Plains, though usually with specific goals or tasks that they have been assigned.

The templars of Daskinor's Shtas Order administrate South Guard's fortress and slave camps, while the Red Guard hunts for slaves and other prey in the Trembling Plains (though few of the Red Guards take levels in the actual templar class). Oronis' Gray Heralds administrate the civil matters at Fort Stench and Conak's Rock, while Kurnan templars of the Black and Green Brotherhoods patrol the roads and guard

fortresses and outposts like Fort Stench and Conak's Rock. Kurnan and Eldaarish double templars constantly struggle to infiltrate each others' organizations, and travel south to infiltrate the organizations of other city-states. Additionally, many persons carry out templar duties in Kurn and Eldaarich without being actual members of the templar class, using *letters of marque* and *letters of reprisal* (see *FFN* for more details).

Draji templars make occasional forays into the Trembling Plains to capture korinth, though since the death of King Tectuktitlay, these trapping parties have been fewer.

**Wilders:** Appearing more often in the Trembling Plains than elsewhere, wilders are common in the north mostly due to the lack of formal psionic training opportunities. Kurnan human females seem especially prone to take the wilder class, developing their native psionic abilities without any formal training, and both Eldaarish and Kurnan spies are often wilders. The kenku of the wastes often have a large number of wilders as well.

**Wizards:** In the Trembling Plains, preservers appear in surprising numbers, with herders and Kurnans practicing preserver magic openly. Even the dreaded Eldaarish Red Guard has preservers among its ranks. The principal employers of defilers in this region include House Tsalaxa, the Bandit States, and the Savak and Shtas orders of Eldaarich. Eloy clans and House Azeth swiftly punish defiling by giving the defiler to the winds, a method of punishment that involves a strong rope and a short drop.

## **Specialists**

**Soulknives:** This class is much more common in the Trembling Plains than in the Tablelands, where they are virtually unknown. Most soulknives in the Trembling Plains originate in Eldaarich, though many have fled in recent years to escape Daskinor's purge of users of the Way. As such, they have attempted to either assimilate with the Eloy herders, offer themselves to Kurn as slaves, join one of the Bandit States, or seek out their fortunes in the Tablelands. House Tsalaxa and the Dedys Consortium often hire soulknives (see *Dark Sun Prestige Class Appendix I*).

**Master Scouts:** These masters of the wilderness are in particularly high demand among the Drylander merchant houses, though any caravan might employ one or more master scouts to scout ahead for bandits and help navigate any hazards along the road. The

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greatest trackers and advanced scouts among the Eloy often become master scouts, the better to stealthily keep tabs on those who might threaten their clans (see *Dark Sun Prestige Class Appendix I*).

**Pyrokineticists:** A handful of very twisted and dangerous Neshtap become pyrokineticists rather than

taking the Red Guard prestige class. Although they never become officers, the Neshtap treat their pyrokineticists as holy men, and they are greatly feared by all who have heard of the dark and horrifying things they have done.

### **Rumors among the Eloy**

**(DC 10)** I can smell it in the wind: the Dragon is Coming Back This Year. (**False** - This rumor has circulated the Trembling Plains for two thousand years since Eldaarich and Kurn took their first and last levies for the Dragon. This was also the year that most of the ancestors of the herders left those cities to hide from the levies. Despite the passage of two thousand years of time, there are still those that say year after year that the Dragon is coming back. Very few people believe the rumor from the Tablelands that the Dragon is dead; they will probably never believe it.)

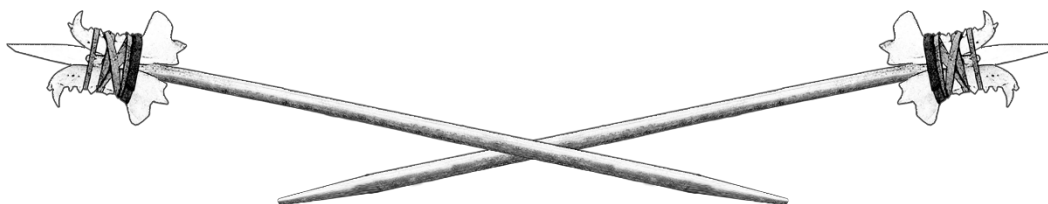
**(DC 14)** Unarmed fighting skills are part of the Eldaarish religion. (**True and False** - While Eldaarich's Haleban templars pretend that there is a single unifying "Eldaarish Religion," there are more cults in Eldaarich than in any other city on Athas. However, many of these cults do teach martial arts. Two of these cults once taught their followers to become soulknives.)

**(DC 15)** More refugees than ever are escaping the Dim Lands these days, and more and more of them have strange and terrible psionic powers. (**True** - Daskinor recently ordered that persons demonstrating psionic abilities be imprisoned or put to death. Consequently, Eldaarish persons with the most flashy and overt psionic abilities are fleeing for their lives.)

**(DC 16)** Daskinor is experimenting with the Eldaarish people and creating psionic monsters. (**False** - The Eldaarish are no more prone to psionics than any other people. Lately, a disproportionately large number of refugees possess psionic powers because Daskinor has ordered such persons imprisoned or put to death. Some of these persons have escaped Daskinor's dungeons; others have lived as fugitives since Daskinor's decree and finally despaired of the decree being reversed. Still others managed to keep their psionic abilities a secret, but were recently unmasked and fled for their lives.)

**(DC 17)** Some crazy refugee woman bought my entire herd, in gold pieces, and then she took my husband, my children, and half of my clan! (**True** - Most herders are satisfied with their crodlu, sygra, and aprig herds, but Pfdra Zkeet is a herder of men. It is also true that Pfdra is mentally ill; she suffers from fugue, does not know who she is, and does not care to remember.)

**(DC 19)** There's a powerful defiler in the Trembling Plains. (**True** - One of the individuals that have joined Pfdra's clan is a defiler; see the adventure hook "Herder of Men" in *FFN* for more details.)



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## Chapter Seven: Dead Cities

*"Dead Cities? Oh aye, the plains and the mountains have more dead settlements than living ones. What? You want to explore them? Take my advice. Drink this, leave your purse with me, and go fling yourself off the walls into the kreen - it'll be a quicker death. Mark my words, if you go looking for those ruins, you're looking for death, and those places of the ancients have enough unquiet dead as it is. Now, another round?"*

- Karinda, brewmistress of the Five Seasons Inn, Azeth's Rest

Life dominates the Trembling Plains themselves, but death and ruin dominate the shattered ancient cities at the Plains' edges. The largest and most impressive cities of what is now the Trembling Plains region have been dead for King's Ages, mostly destroyed during or shortly before the Cleansing Wars. Some of the undead inhabitants of these cities continue to fight out their ancient wars with each other, some plot revenge upon the living, and some seek only to be left alone.

At least twelve ancient, ruined cities sit just past the edge of the Trembling Plains. Each one of these dead cities was larger in its day than Kurn or Azeth's Rest is

today. Most of these dead cities contain restless spirits, some hold great treasures, and all of them hold terrible secrets. The dead cities include: Basrai, a halfling city destroyed by Daskinor's forces; Dzhuzhak, a goblin city in the far south of the Trembling Plains region and destroyed by Daskinor; Hen Gisaz, a troll city destroyed by goblins during the Green Age; Hoyalay, a dwarven city destroyed in the Cleansing Wars; Thorlo, a coastal city riven by civil war; and at least seven additional goblin cities in the White Mountains destroyed by Daskinor, including Juhundhuzar, Ghozer, Ruhrsar, Agzhabar, Whal Khozdem, Uzhdra, and Nidukazi.

### Basrai

Basrai, a ruined Rhul-thaun colony, sits on the Snow Crowns' western slopes, north of Juhudhuzar. Unlike Rhul-thaun cities in the Jagged Cliffs, and its parent city of Lusare farther north, Basrai was built not on cliffs and ledges but as a series of caves cut into the rock faces of the mountains.

Basrai's only ground-level gate was built in a draw in the foothills, concealed by ridges of stone and the forests of the western Snow Crowns. The city prospered for years, defending itself against goblin raids and establishing an unlikely trade relationship with the pterrans of the southern Rohorind Forest, who have long since been driven to extinction.

When the Champions' armies appeared in the northern region, the Rhul-thaun barred Basrai's gate, retreating into their mountain fastness. They remained hidden for years, living off the life-shaped creatures they grew in the city and the jungles of fungus they raised in their caves deep below the mountains.

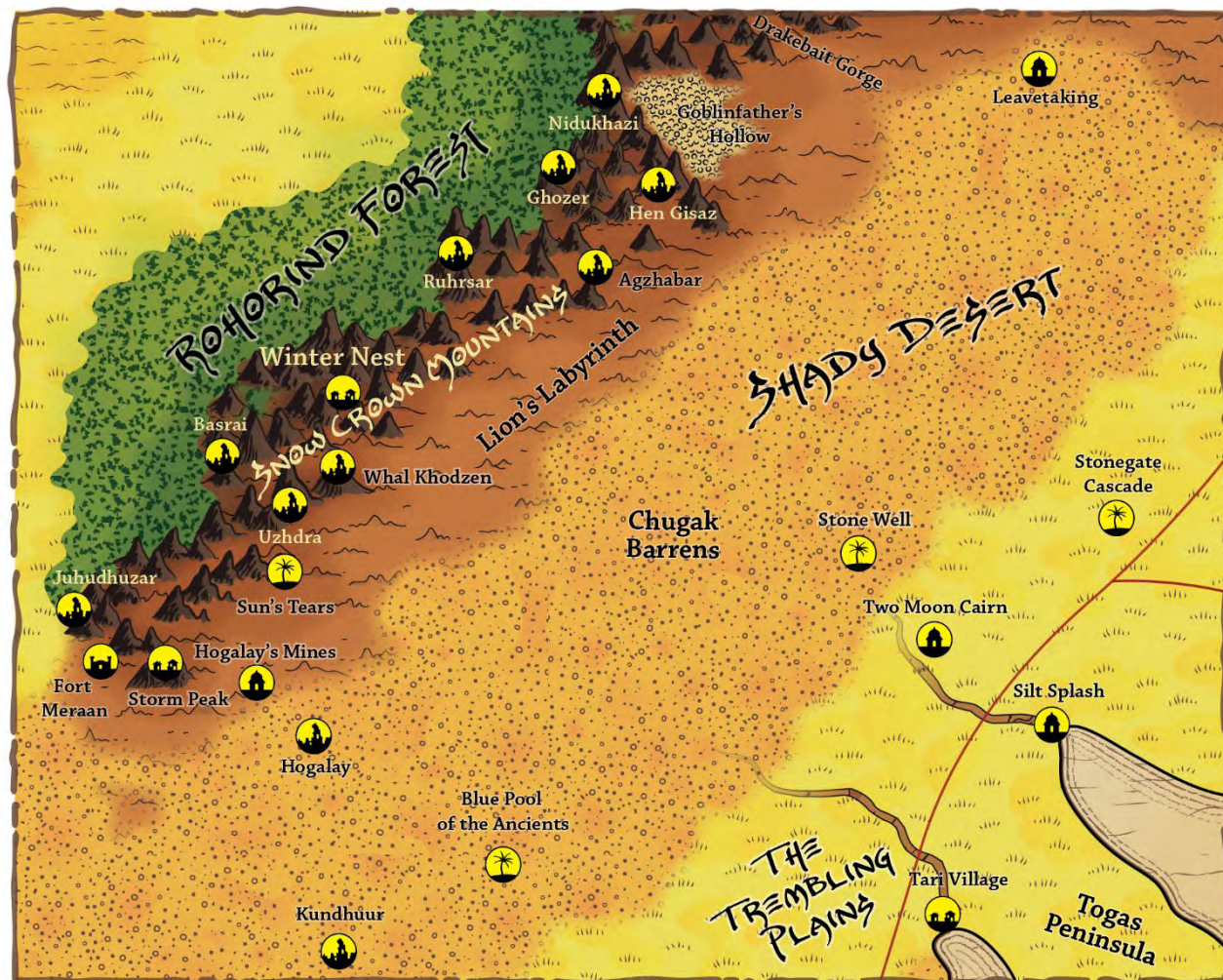
Daskinor's army sacked the goblin holds south of Basrai and then his army marched north tracking

goblin-spoor to Ghozer. The army passed Basrai, but did not find the hidden gate to the Rhul-thaun city, as Daskinor's detection spells were focused on goblins, not halflings. After destroying Ghozer, however, Daskinor returned south and this time his scouts stumbled on the city's gate.

Daskinor knew from his divining spells that no goblins remained in the White Mountains but the fact that this city was built into the mountains like a cave reminded him too much of the goblin cities he had just sacked, and he suddenly doubted his divining powers. Using magical and psionic attacks honed over years of goblin extermination, Daskinor and his army assaulted Basrai.

The halflings had no magic and little psionic skill. Their life-shaped weapons and creatures offered a nasty surprise to the Shtas' elite foot soldiers, but were not powerful enough to offset the psionics and magic of Daskinor's army. The soldiers easily overcame Basrai's defenses and broke into the city, massacring the Rhul-thaun where they stood and wrecking their

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life-shaping workshops. Daskinor arrived too late to prevent the massacre, in fact killing dozens in his bloodlust before realizing the nature of his foe.

In the burning ruins of Basrai, Daskinor considered what he had done. Rajaat forbade his Champions to have any contact with halflings at all, and had specifically ordered the Champions to avoid places such as Orohna Valley and the Jagged Cliffs. But the First Sorcerer had never mentioned that there was a halfling city in the Snow Crowns and, in thousands of years, Daskinor had never heard of civilized halflings who used curious living creatures as weapons and tools. Daskinor remembered watching halflings dock airships in the mountain peaks above his grandparents' cave dwellings as a child, and he now wondered whether those airships were in fact living creatures. For the first time in King's Ages, Daskinor spent an entire afternoon without thinking about goblins or the Cleansing Wars.

Despite realizing that his life depended on his ability to conceal the destruction of the halfling city from Rajaat, Daskinor pillaged many of the halflings' life-shaped objects as his men could recover from the city's wreckage, keeping them for study, and then ordered his men to march south back to the Tablelands. As he left the area, Daskinor used spells to bury the entrance to Basrai with an avalanche of rock.

A significant number of Basrai's halflings survived the battle, escaping through the high shafts that led to the ancient sky-gate that had not been used for generations. These survivors made their way in twos and threes out of the caves and back into the devastated undercity. Most of them died of starvation, but a few survived to clear a path through the rock and made their way north to Lusare.

The narrow passage through Daskinor's avalanche collapsed soon after the halfling survivors made their escape. The rockfall, and the fact that no one knew that the ruins of Basrai existed, ensured that the city

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remained undisturbed for King's Ages. Today, however, the rocks blocking the gate of the city have finally begun to give way, and it would take less than a day of determined effort to clear a narrow route through the stone and enter the ruins.

Beyond Basrai's blocked gate, the caverns lie much as they did the day the last surviving halfling escaped to make the journey north. The city's streets, carved from the rock by life-shaped methods and surprisingly smooth and oval, have been blackened and pitted by the Champion's army, and many of the small homes and shops of the Rhul-thaun have smashed walls and shattered doors. The life-shaping workshops and common areas in the city are also burnt, but these were also largely cleaned out by Daskinor's researchers after the sack.

Dozens of Rhul-thaun corpses, long since reduced to brittle bones and dusty husks, litter the passages near the entrance. These are the remains of survivors who starved to death before they could escape the ruins. The far more numerous corpses of those slain in the battle lie in one of the city's more isolated residential districts, where the halfling survivors gathered them.

The tunnels that serve as roads range from 5 feet wide in the poorer residential areas, to great vaulted caverns

that served as the city's great streets and plazas. Some open caverns, studded with stalactites and ledges, served as the fungus groves and ranches for larger life-shaped creatures. These areas have been taken over by overgrown fungi in the long years since the ruin of Basrai. Many of the giant fungus species found here are unknown elsewhere on Athas.

Given the devastation unleashed by Daskinor's troops, and the millennia the city has lain in ruins, there are few life-shaped creatures left in Basrai. Life-shaped objects are comparatively more common, with many having lapsed into dormancy long ago. Explorers of the ruins will find the occasional life-shaped tool in the residential areas of the city - items that were lost behind demolished walls and the like and therefore overlooked by Daskinor's forces.

There are, however, a number of life-shaped creatures that survived the destruction of the city and have bred true over the millennia, with some being additionally warped by the defiling magicks unleashed by the attackers. Several creeps of arrowhead geckos still skitter around the ruins, feeding off the abundant fungi found in the open caverns. The geckos are in turn hunted by a number of mutated, cannibalistic geckos and darkstrikes.

## **Dhuzhak**

Thirty miles northeast of Dry Spring sits one of the last goblin holds destroyed during the Cleansing Wars. Dzhuzhak, a goblin city founded during the Cleansing Wars by refugees from the White Mountains, lies in the eastern foothills of the Tambrak Mountains, overlooking the Glowing Scablands and the Broken Deep. Coming south, the founding Ubruk tribe and their chiefs knew that Daskinor would follow. Tribal war chiefs ruled newly built Dzhuzhak, supported by a cadre of militant Ash priests. No Earth priests practiced their faith among the Ubruks, so the city had little magical aid in building its structures. The Ubruks also had few psions in Dzhuzhak, since their mindbending caste fought to the last in the White Mountains to give the founders of the city time to escape. The lone refugee mindbender carried with him the Shroud of Martyrs, and remained in Dzhuzhak for only a few months before abruptly leaving with a small cult following that he had gathered, taking them into the mountains.

Anyone with knowledge of stone working will be able to tell that Dzhuzhak's structures were poorly and

hurriedly built. Walls are broken and scattered across streets, and buildings lie topped.

Knowing that Daskinor would come for them, and determined to resist as well as possible, the Ubruks built their city solely for defense, constructing only simple stone huts for residences but developing multilayered defenses, walls, pits, and battlements both within and without the city's single gate. This heavily fortified low-ceilinged gate, built at the top of a long narrow draw, protected interior passages full of blind turns, switchbacks, secret passages, and traps.

The Ubruks chose a heavily forested area to attempt to hide their city. Drawing on the lessons of Uzhdra, they tunneled to create a system of hidden postern gates in the valley and hills, but spread them out so that their troops could make sorties from the distant exits while conserving the closest ones for breathable air.

Despite the local challenges, the Ubruks drilled constantly, and sent spies to the other goblin cities of the east - the cities that had refused them entry, or tried to plunder or enslave them - to watch for Daskinor and



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monitor his progress. As a result, they were able to predict nearly precisely when the Champion would reach Dzhuzhak. They expected that their efforts to hide the city would fail, so they prepared for Daskinor.

The trolls of nearby Krel Ambrol initially posed an unexpected problem. Thousands of years prior, the trolls of Hen Gizaz had tolerated the growing goblin presence in Nidukhazi, and within generations the faster-breeding goblins had ejected the older troll civilization from Hen Gizaz. The trolls did not forget their lessons. Goblin workers disappeared from their posts and reappeared strung up in the forest, alongside the bodies of Dzhuzhak's ambassadors to Krel Ambrol. Troll opposition slowed but did not stop the construction, since while trolls could kill goblins on the outside, they could not enter the narrow goblin-holes.

When the waves of Daskinor's troops assaulted the goblin defenses, the trolls initially assisted subtly, by setting fires that exposed some of the postern gates. Then, as Daskinor's defilers arrived and the forest began to wither, Krel Ambrol's oracles returned from Star Rock and proclaimed that the trolls were fighting on the wrong side, that these goblins had never posed any threat, and that not only Krel Ambrol but the entire troll race would eventually perish at human hands.

The Ubruks' traps caused heavy casualties to Daskinor's forces, but their incomplete fortifications allowed his troops a foothold in the complex, and from there the defilers unleashed extraordinary spellpower on the city. Today, the outer gate is a shattered remnant of its former self, with the doors lying broken and weathered on the ground between the posts. The defenses were massive, and all across the city, magical scoring and psionic devastation are clear to see.

Daskinor preferred to arrive late and turn the tide of battle, but at Dzhuzhak he arrived too late, and his troops finished the city without him, thanks to a hideous new instrument of war that his defilers had bred in the White Mountains: the unrosh.

Most of Dzhuzhak collapsed in the fighting, with nearly the entire goblin population killed. After Daskinor tortured from his prisoners all the information they possessed about other goblins refugees, he fed the unfortunates to the unrosh.

Resembling beached squids bloated by the sun, the unrosh existed to suck the life from plant life to fuel spells. Daskinor himself did not know how his defilers had created the unrosh, since T'az'ra of the Gold Robe, the leader of the defiler cabal which birthed the monstrosities, died in Dzhuzhak's siege. Posted for years in the White Mountains to ensure that no goblin returned, T'az'ra had captured halfling life-shapers in Basrai, and created the unrosh with their cooperation. Unwilling to trust his own army with instruments of such power, and afraid that Rajaat might connect the life-shaped unrosh to Basrai, Daskinor ordered the halflings killed and the unrosh destroyed, but one of the unrosh escaped destruction. This unrosh has since been slowly dying as it runs out of life energy to defile, resting in a great shallow pit on one side of the ruins.

In the chaos of war, some treasures were lost in the wreckage and not recovered by the scroungers Daskinor sent through the ruins after his army moved on. In fact, the scroungers were not very thorough due to the unrosh's terrifying presence.

T'az'ra of the Gold Robe did not emerge into undeath until after the army had moved on, and continues to exist as a fallen. Angry that the army abandoned him, he cursed them all and decided to stay with the unrosh, studying it and preparing for an opportunity to carve out his own kingdom.

The unrosh sits trapped in a great shallow pit on one side of the ruins, about twenty-five feet deep and thirty-five feet across. A foul stench emanates from the pit, nauseating those who come within a few feet of it.

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The land surrounding the pit is permanently defiled, and nothing has grown here in the King's Ages since the attack. Wizards cannot gather energy for their spells in the area, as the unrosh disrupts the movement of energy to the caster. However, a wizard that lays a hand on the unrosh while gathering energy to cast a spell gains the same benefit as if they were touching a tree of life.

Other human undead include a racked spirit, and a few zombies and skeletons, all of them under control of T'az'ra of the Gold Robe. Goblin undead in Dzhuzhak include three khvakhas, one a war chief and two former Ash priests, and many flesh worms (*see FFN for more details*).

The ruins in Dzhuzhak remain unstable, and any of the walls could collapse on the unobservant explorer. There also exist a number of traps and pitfalls never set off by Daskinor's troops.

In the wake of his victory, Daskinor ordered his army to move out while he remained behind for a few days. Drawing on the anger at the loss of his men, Daskinor laid a terrible curse on the ruins of Dzhuzhak, intending to prevent any goblins from coming back after his attack and resettling or finding shelter in the ruins. The curse causes any non-humans (excluding reptilian humanoids such as dray or nikaal, or insectoids such as thri-kreen) to wither and die within days of exposure. Daskinor's curse does not affect undead beings, whatever their race when alive.

## Hen Gisaz



The cave complex of Hen Gisaz lies in the eastern face of the Snow Crowns, southeast of Nidukhazi in what later became known as Goblinfather's Hollow. Trolls moved to Hen Gisaz in the early years of the Rebirth. Goblins later built their city of Nidukhazi during the early Green Age and warred furiously on the trolls, finally forcing them to abandon their caves.

The trolls who left Hen Gisaz migrated north to caves beneath Mounts C'thor and Iezrok in the eastern Buranic Range, establishing new homes. In the succeeding years, however, troll warriors often returned to Hen Gisaz on individual coming of age quests, braving the arduous journey and goblin patrols. These trolls often sought to procure specific items, such as totem-sculptures or household implements, which had been lost in the haste of the

trolls' departure. Nidukhazi's goblins hunted them for sport.

Today the troll ruins of Hen Gisaz lie fallow. The only beings who have lived there since the trolls were driven out have been a small band of goblins who tried to hide from Daskinor's troops during the Cleansing Wars. Daskinor's mountain men discovered the goblins, smoked them out, and killed them in a single quick raid, all without setting foot within Hen Gisaz. The troll homes and relics deep within the complex remained undisturbed until adventurous Kurnan scholars began to explore the ruins eight King's Ages ago.

Hewn in rough domed shapes, the caves of Hen Gisaz had their walls and rounded ceilings worn smooth long ago by the loving hands of the trolls. Eastern-facing apertures in the mountain face permit the morning sun's rays to enter the outermost dwellings, and windows in the dwellings' western walls carry the light into dwellings and passages deeper in the mountains. The trolls venerated the morning sun, considering it the enlivening male energy that awakened the female earth's fertility, and they constructed these apertures and windows so that even the homes deep in the colony would receive the blessings of sunlight.

Kurnan scholars have lovingly reconstructed a model of Hen Gisaz in Kurn's Great Library, and have mounted lead stencils and wax molds taken from the ancient blessings found in the trolls' hearthstones. Kurnan scholars know of no greater troll site that

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humans may safely explore. Because Hen Gizas fell at goblin hands, human voices - and even humans bearing open flame through the trollish halls - do not

conjure scorched drummers and other vengeful spirits from the stone as they might in other troll ruins.

### **Hogalay**



In the stony barrens southeast of the White Mountains, a great hulking butte rises above the others. Its ochre-brown stony face is almost featureless, staring blankly upon the eastern barrens. Cracks slide up the bare beetling walls here and there, as a few small dark holes peek out at travelers who dare approach. These are the ruins of Hogalay, well known and rightly feared.

Those who approach will find that heaps of shattered stone and cracked, half-melted rock-glass lie in broken middens all around the battered cliff face. Ringing the butte are the remains of what appear to be a number of massive ramps. The reddish rock wall was breached on the southeastern side, and a jagged rent opens through the cliff face, just above one of the taller and more substantial remaining ramps. Explorers familiar with

siege warfare will recognize that a great battle was fought here ages ago.

Those seeking to enter Hogalay must do so either via this ramp and its breach in the southeastern wall, or by going around the butte, following the line of shattered stone piles to the western face, where the city stares up toward the Snow Crown mountains. Earth-worshipping dwarves built Hogalay to face towards the mountains the Earth Lords had raised for their benefit, and away from the plains, which, even in the Time of Magic, were inhabited by lesser races not blessed with the favor of Earth or showered with its riches.

Hogalay sits inside an enormous rocky butte. The city's homes, squares, and markets open onto a vast central amphitheater shaped like an inverted cone open to the

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sky. The city was built on a grand scale, with the finest homes located on the upper terraces. This construction gave the wealthiest and most powerful dwarves a substantial walk to the central plaza's smooth stone floor, but also gave their homes the grandest views. The central plaza opened westward into a magnificent thoroughfare that led to an even larger open plaza at the western edge of the butte. The grand boulevard ran through a split in the rock wall that divided the city's east and west sides; this gap in the wall widened as it rose, thus affording the views so prized by the wealthiest of Hogalay's common caste.

Climbing the ramp on the city's southeastern side leads onto the third level of the amphitheater. Passing through a series of broken tunnels and corridors reveals the glint of sunlight beyond, and stepping out – over broken shards of stone and bone, and the cold cinders of a city set afire – reveals a terrace overlooking the central plaza. The homes of Hogalay's tens of thousands of dwarves lie vacant, gloomy, and shadowed, harboring creatures which hunt the unwary. The wind whistles through the notch in the bare western wall day and night here, contrasting sharply with the echoing of the surrounding structures. King's Ages of harsh weather have chipped and cracked the cobblestones, and sections of stones still remain broken or melted from Hogalay's violent last days.

All those who lived in the city's amphitheater - even the very rich - belonged to the city's common caste. The priestly caste, to which Hogalay's rulers belonged, dwelt in the western side of the rock wall. The grand palaces and temples of Hogalay's kings and priests rose up the western face of this rock wall, their backs to the central plaza and their windows and terraces opening onto the mountains, granting them an uninterrupted view of their gods' handiwork. Sturdy post and lintel doors and windows overlooking the central plaza gave way to stern, angular cornices and buttresses in the western plaza, with the lower temple balustrades supported by massive pylons riven from the living rock.

The view is particularly awe-inspiring from the courtyard – temple upon temple rising upwards from the level of the plaza to the top of the rock wall like ranks of great stone faces carved with fierce sharp angles. Unlike those on the amphitheater side, here the grandest and most opulent structures stand on the lowest levels, where space was less of a constraint and the view equally good from any height. Today the temples all stand shattered and hideous, their spacious

interiors lit by eerie shafts of half-light cutting through fissures left by terrific magical and psionic battles. Dust, made equally of powdered stone and powdered bone, lies thick within these closed halls, but much of it has been disturbed.

Blown sand and the detritus of the King's Ages litter Hogalay's ruins, but many structures still remain standing. The city's amphitheater, two of the city's massive pyramid-shaped Earth temples, and numerous other large buildings outside the city center have survived essentially intact. The Earth King's palace and the Temple to Earth Triumphant - devastated by the battle between Egendo and the Earth King - have had their façades reduced to rubble. Much of these structures were tunneled into the cliff face behind them, however, and many of these corridors remain at least partially intact. Perhaps the most significant surviving building is an Earth temple on the northern side of the west-facing rock wall, where two of the ziggurat-like structure's four corner pylons still stand. Halfway up the amphitheater wall, one of Hogalay's palestras also largely survived, its broken arcades grinning like a skull in the crimson sunlight. The wreck of one of the city's larger psionic schools also survived with little damage, though Egendo's troops thoroughly sacked the interior.

An old passage leads from the western plaza to the mines of Hogalay, where gibbering caveghouls now dwell. A bit of light work shifting fallen stones is all that is necessary to render the tunnel passable. Egendo's troops never found the tunnel, since the fight between Egendo and the Earth King shattered the plaza, causing the entrance to become lost among the broken stone blocks.

### **History of Hogalay**

Hogalay was once a dwarven city, founded in the Green Age. It prospered, its fortunes made by the rich veins of rock ore, deep crystal, and deposits of rare metals in the southern Snow Crowns. The dwarves of Hogalay earnestly worshiped the Lords of Earth, and came to be ruled by an Earth King, a powerful cleric of the city's official faith.

In its heyday, Hogalay dominated the forest that then lay on both sides of the Snow Crowns. Only the elven city-state of Kurn, to the northwest, checked Hogalay's power. Because of Hogalay, Tanysh chariots from the south never reached into the shadows of the Snow Crowns; Hogalay even kept the goblin cities in check, reducing them to warring on each other and creatures

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dwelling farther up in the mountains, such as the aarakocra.

Each day, Hogalay's dwarves passed from their homes in the central amphitheater, down broad terraces to the central plaza, and out through the notch in the rock wall. Paying their respects to the temples and their occupants, often with whistled tune-prayers and small offerings, they shouldered their picks and mattocks and passed down the deep well in the western plaza's stone floor, traveling underground to Hogalay's mines beneath the Snow Crowns.

For King's Ages, Hogalay remained at peace with its neighbors, growing powerful and wealthy. Goblin raids into the city's mines were met with force, and the goblins of the southern Snow Crown Mountains learned to respect the dwarves' territory and avoid provocations. Late in the Green Age, foes from further abroad appeared, however, and were not so easily quelled. The gnomes of Udreegas, heretics of Earth from the north, fought several wars with Hogalay, wars characterized as much by religious fervor as by the gnomes' needs for food and lumber from areas not devastated by volcanic ash. These gnomish crusades emboldened the goblins, and in the Time of Magic, the dwarves of Hogalay were faced with further attacks from the goblin city of Whal Khozdem.

The dwarves, led by their powerful Earth clerics, vanquished the goblins once more and then fought several more wars with the gnomes of Udreegas. Even after the gnomish wizards overthrew their ruling priesthood, the gnomes' need for lumber and cropland remained intense, and their foraging parties regularly invaded Hogalay's territory. Despite mounting several retaliatory sieges, however, the dwarves never managed to capture Udreegas.

During the late Green Age and the Time of Magic, Hogalay maintained good relations with the elvish city of Kurn to the northeast and even developed into a major trading center, hosting many humans, elves, and other traders passing between the Tablelands and the cities farther north. Hogalay's Earth King foresaw the ruin of the Cleansing Wars, however, and ensured that the city's defenses never fell into disrepair.

Hogalay reached the zenith of its power at the end of the Time of Magic. Its metal mines largely played out, Hogalay relied on its deposits of quality stone. Then the refugees began to arrive from the Tablelands - dwarves with tales of slaughter and ruin at the hands of Borys's predecessor Egendero of Carsys, the first Dwarf-Butcher.

Pursuing the refugees and lured by legends of Hogalay's wealth and power, the Champion followed close on the heels of the fleeing dwarves. Egendero Silvermane and his army besieged the city; for three years the dwarves resisted, with the powers of Earth shattering the Silvermane's ramps and siege towers, before at last invading forces breached Hogalay's western wall and charged into the city. Egendero himself led the assault on the city's southeastern side, his power so far outstripping that of his allies and foes alike that he drove through to the western side of Hogalay well ahead of his soldiers.

There, alone at the gates of the palace of the dwarven king, Egendero's arrogance and anger were his undoing. The Champion attacked the palace alone, hewing down the guards and blasting the royal priests. But the dwarves were strong and well prepared, and had set a trap designed by the Earth King himself. Knowing of Egendero's tendency for self-isolation, the dwarves drew the Dwarf-Butcher into a consecrated area. When they began their spell of untold power, Egendero tried to fight his way out of the trap, but the dwarves proved too much for him. The battle wrecked the temple-palace, leaving gaping fissures and pits in the earth and shattering surrounding buildings.

The Earth King overcame the Champion, but the dwarves feared they could not destroy him, so they cast him into a fissure prepared before the battle. The Earth King and his clerics, calling upon their elemental lords, sealed the pit with a powerful ward. The Champion's troops arrived at the palace to find no trace of Egendero, and the dwarven leaders escaping.

The human army laid waste to Hogalay. The conquerors were left with little time for serious looting, however, since Egendero's chief defiler - Borys of Ebe, who led the storm of Hogalay - was eager for promotion.

## **The Rest of the Story**

After Hogalay fell, with no living dwarf left in the city, Egendero's army withdrew. None of the other Champions knew what had happened to Egendero, but Rajaat was aware that his servant was writhing in imprisonment deep in the earth. The First Sorcerer left his servant there, suffering for his failings and potentially serving the cause of the Pristine Tower in the future - if necessary, the failed Champion could be reclaimed later and used as a Champion against the humans.

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For King's Ages, Egendo struggled to free himself from imprisonment. He could distantly sense the outside world, and was dimly aware of the other Champions' rebellion against Rajaat and their long rules in the Tablelands. Egendo continually attempted one method after another to escape his captivity; he gained aid from Listana, a wraith and former captain in his army, who scoured the ruins and surrounding area for creatures to possess and return to Egendo. The former Champion used the life energy of these creatures to fuel his spells. Egendo's struggles released so much energy that mild earthquakes became - until recently - common in the southern wastes.

### **Egendo's Escape**

On the lowest - or plaza - level of the temple palaces is a great temple that has been smashed as though struck by a tremendous hammer, with the remnants of the temple's façade swallowed by a sinkhole in the rock below. Located halfway between the thoroughfare from the amphitheater and the edge of the butte, the upturned stone plates around the edge of the

enormous sinkhole glitter in a dozen colors, looking more like gemstone than rock. Beyond them, the gaping maw of what remains of the temple looms, dark and terrifying. Egendo of Carsys, known to his troops as Silvermane, the first Butcher of Dwarves, stalks these ruins after his recent escape from his prison-cyst. For four thousand years, his rage-fueled spells have rocked the surrounding area with earthquakes, electrical storms, and other strange phenomena. This, along with projections of Egendo's anger and hate, caused most visitors to stay away from this area for King's Ages.

Egendo recently forced his way out of the dwarven prison, after recent events weakened the powerful magics that held him bound for three millennia. Egendo is now secretly taking stock of the world the Cleansing Wars made. In his currently weakened condition, Egendo realizes he cannot face any of the other Champions. His servant, the wraith Listana, prefers to reside in a ten-foot-tall bronze statue of an early dwarven king. They wait for news and seek to slowly rebuild power. Egendo knows he may have to cause earthquakes to keep all but the most experienced

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adventurers away; those who have the most knowledge of the world.

After his escape, the first victims that Egendo managed to lure to the ruined palace was a group of Eloy herders. Egendo consumed all but one of the herders, absorbing their memories and trying to learn what happened in the world since his imprisonment early in the Cleansing Wars. Annoyed at the naïve and sincere extravagance of Eloy stories, Egendo sent the last of the herders running back to Azeth's Rest with a large chunk of amethyst from the Cyst - Egendo's former prison - hoping to draw more knowledgeable people to the site.

Egendo's defeat by the Earth King, his long imprisonment, and desperate (but finally successful) efforts to escape have weakened him in various ways. In the escape from his prison, Egendo had to cannibalize all of his magical and psionic gear, and as such is currently rebuilding his strength.

Today Egendo seeks information, and any PCs who enter the great temple will cross paths with him. He will interrogate them, then probably let them go after altering their memories to keep himself secret. If the PCs are well connected, he may even leave their memories intact, to draw more knowledgeable and powerful individuals to the area, as he did with the herder. Egendo knows he is weakened and in an exposed position, and does not want a full-scale exploration of the ruins. He prefers to take on challengers in smaller, easier to defeat groups. He has suffered long agony, trapped away for his past mistakes, and will not allow his carelessness to destroy his plans again.

Egendo spends his time gathering information on the political and military situation on Athas. He has a particular interest in the other Champions, and in Rajaat. He will use outdated terminology in his questions, probably confusing anyone he speaks to at first. He will tell them little about Hogalay, dismissively commenting that it was "a warren of rock dogs" - if there is a dwarf in the group, Egendo will lighten his rhetoric only slightly, being both ashamed of what the Earth King did to him, and too haughty to admit it. Kreen and half-giants will fascinate him; halflings, lask, belgoi, and other exotic races will also pique his interest, and cause him to ask very pointed questions. One look at the mixed-blood Eloy sufficed to tell Egendo that the Cleansing Wars had failed - but he still wonders as to the particulars of Rajaat's imprisonment and the Rebellion.

If he discovers news of the Bandit States, Egendo will see these as a place to lay low while gathering information, and he will be especially interested in Talid, leader of Ravage. He will offer his services as an advisor to Talid, giving him the opportunity to unite the Bandit States under his banner. Egendo will seek to become Talid's second, biding his time while amassing knowledge and power. The former Champion has waited three thousand years to gain his freedom, a few more decades seem a small price to pay.

### **The Cyst**

Deep below the ruins of Hogalay's Temple to Earth Triumphant, accessible only via more than 150 feet of tortuous climbing down through broken fissures and narrow crevices, lies the cyst created by the dwarves to imprison Egendo. The magicks which created the chamber, and which Egendo finally breached, prevent magical or psionic travel into and out of the cyst.

The cyst is more than 25 feet high and at least 15 feet across at its widest point, being vaguely egg-shaped. When created, it was a shell of hardened stone 15 feet thick. Egendo's struggles over the King's Ages altered the stone, gradually transforming many parts of it into crystal. The Champion's efforts varied over time, so the crystallization process proceeded unequally across the cyst, but parts of the shell gradually transformed into massive blocks of agate, jade, lapis lazuli, and other semi-precious stones. These stones would make for powerful additions to both magical and psionic items, increasing their power manyfold if the creator knew how to unlock their potential. More valuable than these giant blocks of gemstones, however, is a black hand embedded in the upper edge of the cyst. Boasting 12-inch long talons, Egendo's clawed left hand - a remnant from the accident that earned him the name Silvermane - was the first part of his body that he was able to break out of the cyst. However, the shell's magicks were still potent enough to reseal around the breach, and the Champion's hand was burned off his arm by the power of the cyst's magic. It remains embedded in the stone, imbued with great powers that a wizard might research and exploit. Egendo regrew most of his lost hand, but the middle talon grew back deformed and blackened. The Champion left behind more than his hand in his prison, however. The cyst is guarded by the grim guiltshades, a form of incorporeal undead sloughed off from Egendo during his imprisonment. If someone were able to pry free the hand, the guiltshades would

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release and seek to join their “father” (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Others**

A handful of dwarven banshees have also served to keep tomb robbers and scavengers away from Hoyalay over the King’s Ages. There are fewer of them than might be expected though, since most of the dwarves who perished at Hoyalay accomplished their foci, either by capturing Egendero or protecting their kin. Also, most of Hoyalay’s citizens escaped Hoyalay alive.

In the higher amphitheater terraces of the western rock wall, there remain a few residences, smaller buildings, and temples which escaped plunder. Many of these are haunted by lesser dwarven undead.

Listana, an officer from Egendero’s army, returned as a wraith after her death to help her beloved master escape, “herding” creatures for use as “spell fodder” for Egendero’s sorcery. There is also a small battalion of human fallen, but they reject Listana’s leadership and avoid Egendero. They regularly battle the banshees, but will also fight human intruders into the ground that they gave their lives to take.

Large stone golems stand watch in the Great Temple itself, keeping the living from entering, but the golems do not recognize undead, so the banshees are able to travel here without trouble. An Earth cleric of sufficient power could command the golems to stand down. Indeed, the banshee who still holds vigil in the great temple holds this power. During the invasion, the banshee, a dwarf named Hortruk Hammerfall, defended the temple. While Egendero’s troops poured into the city, his wife Terrasi became trapped. In a moment of desperation, Hortruk broke his focus to go and save his wife. During the fighting, Hortruk took a blow meant for Terrasi and died. His wife, realizing the sacrifice that was made for her, cried out a curse on herself and those around her. They died together, taking their attackers with them. They both rose quickly into undeath, Hortruk as a banshee and Terrasi as a *raaig*, and fought off the looting Championless army. Many treasures remain here, if the undead dwarves will permit an explorer access.

Most of the other beings that exist in Hoyalay are elemental in nature. The undead that dwell here ignore them, treating them as part of the landscape.

### **Rewards**

While the city of Hoyalay appears looted, the city was the home to a grand faith in the powers of Earth, and as such many compartments and storage spaces rest hidden behind rock walls. Earthen edifices conceal closets and pantries, which sometimes contain implements that pass for treasure in present-day Athas due to their metallic content.

The most valuable treasures include the religious items which the clerics used in their daily rites and rituals. Those who discover one of these items may be granted some favor by the Lords of Earth, such as an increase in spellcasting ability (+1 effective Earth cleric caster level). Kurn’s Great Library would pay handsomely for these objects, as would the bandit state of Kel’s Lot.

Normally disregarded as treasure, large quantities of high quality stone, whether cut and shaped or just in blocks, sit in a cavern below the amphitheater. The dwarves planned to use the blocks as barrier material, and they’ve sat here unused for over three thousand years. The cavern also hosts rare dwarven statues. To dwarves, the original statues were priceless: dwarven kings and generals, philosophers and artists, great psions and powerful Earth clerics, all carved by some of the greatest dwarven crafters during what many dwarves consider their race’s golden age. Over the King’s Ages, Listania the wraith has amused herself by possessing and contorting these statues, then leaving the noble dwarven icons in the most undignified positions imaginable. The statues would have great value again, to the right buyer, if someone managed to put the statues back into their original dignified postures. Listania often possesses the statues for combat purposes, and enjoys degrading dwarvenkind by using a statue of a mighty dwarven warrior to herd *inix* and *mekillots* towards Egendero.

### **Hoyalay’s Mines**

The mines in the foothills to the northeast were once dwarven works; the dwarves from Hoyalay mined here and fought the goblins many times before finally driving them out of the mines. Gibbering caveghouls – the corrupted descendants of the Hoyalay miners – dwell in the mines now (See Chapter Three: “The Lay of the Land” for more details on Hoyalay’s mines and their inhabitants).



## The Goblin Cities of the Snow Crowns

Seven ruined goblin cities dot the White Mountains: Juhudhuzar on the southern tip of the Snow Crowns; Ghozer and Ruhrsar in the west, facing the Rohorind forest; Nidukhazi beneath the mountains due west of Kurn, with gates opening to both sides of the Snow Crowns; and Agzhabar, Walt Khodzem, and Uzhdra on the eastern side facing the Trembling Plains.

### Agzhabar

The ruined goblin city of Agzhabar lies south of Nidukhazi, also in the eastern face of the Snow Crowns. Founded during the Cleansing Wars by refugees fleeing from Daskinor's devastation in the Ringing Mountains, Agzhabar was the last of the eight goblin cities to be built. Its short existence, less than two King's Ages, was filled with warfare against Nidukhazi to the north, as well as with mounting raids against the aarakocra of the higher mountains and defending against Daskinor's raiders.

Tribal chiefs who fled north from the Ringing Mountains together ruled Agzhabar. The tribes' most potent mindbenders and the highest clergy of both Ash and Earth were also part of the city government. In Agzhabar, Ash was by far the more prevalent religion, and Ash clerics dominated goblin society.

The goblins of Agzhabar knew that the humans who had driven them north would eventually follow, so they prepared defenses. Indeed, they chose Agzhabar's location – natural caves protected by several narrow entrances within high draw valleys – because it was the most defensible place the tribal chiefs could find. The goblins lived in the natural caves, devoting their entire construction effort to the building of heavily fortified gates and walls along the draw valleys.

Daskinor's army easily crushed Agzhabar's unfinished defenses, which were based primarily on walls and gates outside the face of the mountains. Daskinor captured the second wall before the outer ring, and massacred the city's best defenders who were still trapped in the outermost defenses.

Reduction of the third and final defensive wall took a month of hard fighting, but with Agzhabar's best troops already dead, the defense lost spirit. Daskinor's defilers led his men in a triumphant last assault, smashing the final gate and letting the troops burst in. The natural caves were a surprise, however, and a



surprisingly large number of goblins escaped in the confusion.

Daskinor's men slaughtered most of Agzhabar's inhabitants, but were unable to seal the hidden side caves. Hundreds of refugees escaped this way – most of these fled north to Nidukhazi, but a few fled south or west across the mountains. Goblins that fled across the mountains were either killed by vengeful aarakocra or by the brutal cold.

Three narrow draw valleys, opening eastwards from the Snow Crowns, were once the entrances to the goblin city of Agzhabar. Sheer cliffs bound the ridges between the three valleys, and heaps of tumbledown stones lie under the barest scrub brush and dry lichen – attentive visitors, perhaps seeking shelter from a storm, will find that the weathered stones were once stone blocks, now cracked and weathered by more than a thousand years of exposure. Those with an understanding of fortifications or siegecraft will see three distinct lines of ancient walls, now reduced to little more than tumbled lines of battered stones. On close examination, many of the stones – especially on their long-buried undersides – reveal scorches, melted spots, and even claw-marks from some ancient battle.

The largest of the gates to what was once Agzhabar is the northernmost of the three. A faint trail runs along the bottom of the draw, leading through a thick tangle of brush to an ancient, much weathered, and brutally broken portal. Once it would have been a simple post-and-lintel gate, 10 feet wide but only 5 feet tall, made of enormously heavy stone blocks levered together.

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Now little of this remains, the great menhirs having been broken in half and fallen into the portal.

Two of the three narrow draws lead to slit-like gaps in the cliff-faces, wide enough for no more than three humans to pass abreast. The stone jambs of these narrow gaps are broken and cracked, clearly split by more than merely the passage of time. Choked with boulders and overgrown with shade-growing thorn bushes, the passages are almost invisible, and may have remained untouched for millennia.

Inside, however, is another story. The main entrance and the central slit pass through several narrow switchback passages to emerge onto what was once the central plaza of Agzhabar. No constructed chamber but instead a vast natural cave, this huge cavern lies enshrouded in darkness but not silence. From the floor - scattered with broken stone and bits of ancient weapons - to the dimly-seen windows and portals opening down onto the cavern from all sides, the slippery sounds of wet things slouch and slither.

Explorers will see, perhaps in the light of guttering torches, the disemboweled and flayed corpses of long-dead goblins groping towards them, silent but for the slurping of their entrails dragging along behind them. Freshly mutilated, the goblin dead arose as flesh worms, or gluk'kiuks (so named for the sound made as they slime across the floor), a hideous form of undead rarely seen outside the goblin cities despoiled by Daskinor during the Cleansing Wars. Gluk'kiuks move slowly - few having intact limbs with which to drag themselves - and though they often lack eyes or other traditional sensory organs, their sense for living flesh is unerring. Fast-moving and careful visitors, especially those who take advantage of the broken floor, pits, stalactites and stalagmites common in the caverns, can stay out of the gluk'kiuks' reach. Though the gluk'kiuks number in the hundreds, they are slow creatures, and challenging terrain often stymies them - it is difficult to climb without limbs, as canny adventurers may realize, but the gluk'kiuks manage, albeit slowly.

The central cavern of Agzhabar was once a manicured public space - the only such one in the city, since it started as a refugee settlement for goblins fleeing the Cleansing Wars in the Tablelands. The goblins of Agzhabar included not only worshippers of Earth, but a great many adherents of Fire, particularly the popular goblin Fire cult which glorified the Ash aspect of Fire. The central cavern floor was laboriously flattened by goblin acolytes of this Ash cult and the resulting open space was given over to a vast, slow-

burning cinder pit, in which incenses of various kinds were burned, as well as the city's dead. The bodies of goblins faithful to Ash were lowered into the cinder pit by pulleys affixed to the cave roof, and left to smolder into ash.

Above the central cave, most of the stalactites are sheared off and broken, but a few remain, including one holding the remains of the pulley system used to lower goblin corpses into the cinder pit - now filled with naught but cold ashes. Explorers who locate this contraption, and divine its purpose, may be able to use magical, psionic, or even mundane means to pull themselves off the floor and away from the gluk'kiuks - though how long the rawhide and wire "ropes" will hold, or how much weight they will bear, is impossible to know.

The areas of Agzhabar above the central plaza, filled as it is with boulders and shattered rock, are crude stone dwellings, often hacked into the rock walls of the caves. Most are simple one or two-room apartments, often with melted windows and doors, blackened with fire and filled with broken crockery, dusty bone implements, and shattered piles of what may have once been stone furniture littering the rooms. The most affluent goblin homes were larger and their now-petrified wooden furniture could prove valuable for sale, if the right market could be found, and the heavy timbers and slats moved.

The southernmost entrance to Agzhabar, which was once a postern gate, leads via a series of narrow alley-like passages to the city's Earth temple, from which other passages lead to the city center. Little more than one of the larger and more attractive caverns, the temple survived mostly intact. It remains one of the few areas of the city free of gluk'kiuks, as it is the haunt of one of the city's more unusual undead: Gzaftir Goldfingers. Gzaftir is a raaig of the Earth faith, who perished in the conquest and rose to defend his former holy precincts. Gzaftir has no love of humans, but he despises the gluk'kiuks and the khvakhas which command the city, and he will willingly assist anyone friendly to the Earth faith who seeks succor in his temple. The cost for his hospitality is listening to him recount the history of the city, and the failures of the dominant Ash clerics to safeguard it. Gzaftir gets his name from the fact that the Earth powers blessed him by transforming his claws from keratin to gold.

Despite the signs of Agzhabar's violent destruction, the assault on the city was swift and the natural caves which make up most of the city proved more durable than structures elsewhere did; the caves were not

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substantially damaged by the attack, making the risk of cave-ins and collapse lower than in most other goblin ruins. Nor did Daskinor allow his troops long to plunder the city, so many household treasures, such as quartz jewelry, well-made copper pots, and other implements (often decorated with totemic patterns) the goblins considered valuable enough to bring with them from the Tablelands, still remain within the city. Many of these items lie cached in nooks and niches in the wall or floor, and covered by clever stone caps; though most are still in good condition, it would be a considerable effort to search for them.

The only beings capable of sustained control over gluk'kiuks are khvakhas (see "khvakhas" entry in FFN for more details), the undead born of the tortured deaths of the goblin leaders. Ezzhedinu, Qakhvash, and Javzunda, Aghzhabar's most powerful khvakhas, battle each other continually for supremacy, occasionally pausing to put down the human undead known as castaways (see FFN for more details).

Two of Daskinor's personal guards, now wraiths, dwell in one of the tribal compounds in a side cave off the main chamber, and have managed to keep it free of gluk'kiuks; whether they are willing to treat with explorers or not is another question.

Another inhabitant is Thuil the Morg (see FFN for more details), originally one of Daskinor's favored warriors, and raised into unlife in recognition of his heroic services in battle in the Tablelands. At Agzhabar, Thuil was in command of the legion and ordered the break the goblins' innermost ring of defenses, which he did – but not quickly enough. The delay allowed hundreds if not thousands of goblins to escape, and Daskinor blamed Thuil. He tortured the morg, then immured him in a cave wall, from which Thuil escaped only several King's Ages ago. Since then, he has labored unceasingly to assert control over the human undead in Azghabar, though with only limited success. Thuil continues to fight the goblin undead to hold territory for Daskinor, though, after all these centuries, a particularly persuasive visitor might convince him to abandon his loyalty to Daskinor.

### **False Juhudhuzar and True Juhudhuzar**

Juhudhuzar's ruins sit in the extreme southwestern tip of the White Mountains. It was the third goblin city founded in the Snow Crowns and the second-to-last to perish during the Cleansing Wars. Juhudhuzar began

its existence as a mining colony of Vharat, a great goblin city located in the southern Ringing Mountains about ninety miles northwest of where Wallis is today. When - late in the Green Age - the copper mines ran out, Vharat withdrew its interests and recalled its governors from Juhudhuzar. Delighted to be rid of their overlords, the goblins built "New Juhudhuzar" inside of a secret valley only six miles north of Juhudhuzar, but kept the old city open for business, serving as a front should their enemies ever attack. These enemies, such as other goblins, wemics, and dwarves from Hogalay, repeatedly destroyed Juhudhuzar, leaving virtually empty-handed each time, but a few years later the city-front would reopen for business. This false front would prove useful again during the Cleansing Wars.

Noble clan chiefs – almost a hundred of them – ruled Juhudhuzar through a council which enforced its laws through a meorty. As the meorty began to punish knifings and poisonings with strict fines, Juhudhuzar became the safest and most civil of goblin societies.

Juhudhuzar honored the faiths of Ash and Earth, and - emulating Nidukhazi to the north - encouraged psionic study. Meanwhile, goblin druids guarded the Earthen Gullet, a grotto with toothlike stalagmites and stalactites deep under the mountains.

When the Cleansing Wars began, refugees fleeing from the massacres in the Ringing Mountains found refuge in Juhudhuzar. The clan chiefs inducted the newcomers into their clans, using them to form additional militia bands to defend clan interests and the city alike. False Juhudhuzar lay directly in Daskinor's path when he invaded the White Mountains. Asherakh, the city's meorty, led a token resistance until the city fell, as it had so many times before. No goblin remained alive for Daskinor to interrogate, since the defenders had been undead for years; the living had run towards the northeast when Daskinor approached. Finding little of value in what he thought was Juhudhuzar, and seeing little defensive value, Daskinor sent his army to pursue the goblins that had escaped. Not until years later did Daskinor realize that the real city – New Juhudhuzar - had escaped his grasp.

As Daskinor moved north along the Snow Crowns and destroyed more goblin cities, other goblin refugees streamed to Juhudhuzar. The most significant refugee was not a goblin, but the goblin artifact called the Clanging Gnasher. Earth clerics fleeing the ruin of Whal Khozdem brought this potent symbol of goblinkind to New Juhudhuzar, where the goblin

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shamans put it to good use, drawing on the devotion of the city's Ash and Earth clerics. When Daskinor finally returned, the goblins, inspired by the Clanging Gnasher, fought with unnatural ferocity. Weakened by their long siege of Nidukhazi, and stalked by the fanatics of a new goblin group known as The Martyrs, Daskinor's army suffered almost as badly as the defenders in the two year long siege of New Juhudhuzar. In one bitter winter, Daskinor's army diminished more from desertions and disciplinary killings than it did from actual goblin attacks.

Even after the walls fell, the defenders, still armed with the Gnasher, continued to fight the invaders block for block, street for street, tunnel by tunnel. Meanwhile, The Martyrs continued to disrupt Daskinor's supply lines. After three grueling seasons of urban slaughter, Daskinor personally entered the fray to clean up the last band of defenders.

Today, New Juhudhuzar's ruins remain well-hidden from passing travelers. Little remains of the city's gates save for piles of stone fused together by dark magicks. The various outer defenses blend into the surrounding terrain and escape view from below. Only one entrance to the city remains - a high wind-worn tower that appears to be a natural rock formation. Half of the city lies above the ground, with buildings segregated by allegiance to a specific noble chief. The rest of the city was underground, built within a massive tunnel system of natural caverns. The Earthen Gullet, a grotto with stalagmites and stalactites shaped like massive stone teeth, lies at the bottom of this massive complex, and it was here that the Clanging Gnasher was hidden. Irontusk, the goblin druid who protected the Gullet when the city fell, no longer remembers his name. Since being burned alive by Daskinor and arising as a krag, Irontusk only recalls his hatred for all living things - especially humans.

Some treasure survived the intense fighting that destroyed the city. The khavkhas of New Juhudhuzar have had millennia to search for, excavate, and gather what they find useful, but the Earth priests among them have lost their spells. A truly ambitious excavation still might turn up items of value, such as metal armor, on those goblin leaders who were crushed by collapsing caves.

When Daskinor personally joined the fighting, he used powerful magic to destroy the upper city. These spells, called "Daskinor's boot-prints," slammed craters into the ground. Deeper into the caverns the effects of the fighting were different, but no less destructive. The

caverns still bear marks of magical blasts and psionic attacks, leaving some sections of the natural caverns smooth and slippery, while leaving others broken and jagged.

Despite the damage and the destruction of the buildings, the caverns themselves remain surprisingly stable, and those who venture into New Juhudhuzar's depths need not worry about cave-ins or underground landslides. At the base of the city, the Earthen Gullet sits intact, like a giant mouth ready to devour anything that steps between its toothy stalactites and stalagmites.

Goblin undead include Asherakh (Male Goblin Meorty Fighter 9, LE; see FFN for more details), hundreds of flesh worms, and at least three khvachas, including Egruz, one of the fanatical Earth clerics who brought the Clanging Gnasher to Juhudhuzar. Asherakh and his former companion, Tvakch - now a krag - hate each other with a passion.

Human undead, known as "Daskinor's castaways", include a small team of fallen who animate whatever bodies they find to fight in their defense.

### **Ghozer**

The ruins of Ghozer lie in the west-facing Snow Crown Mountains north of Basrai. Ghozer was one of the later goblin cities, being the fifth one founded. A small band of refugees from the ruin of Uzhdra first settled Ghozer, but these survivors were soon joined by discontented goblins from the city of Juhudhuzar. As a result of this mingling of groups, all three goblin faiths - Fire, Ash, and Earth - found worshipers here.

Kings ruled Ghozer, but not in dynastic succession. The great families of the city, comprised of the nobles and priests, would gather to elect a new ruler whenever the current king died or was assassinated. Members of all three religious hierarchies recruited from among the nobles, thus binding the secular and ecclesiastical authorities together. These groups together controlled not only royal elections but also psionic training in the city.

Ghozer was a small city, which helped the nobles and priests maintain control. In addition, the priesthoods of Fire, Ash, and Earth together operated an extremely efficient secret police inquisition. This organization's powers were checked only in cases involving senior members of the city's major families, spies from other goblin cities or from the elemental priesthoods of those cities, and those not easily disposed of.

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For King's Ages, Ghozer provided a center for goblin raiders. Each family in the city prided itself on blooding its warriors by mounting regular attacks on the aarakocra in the hills and up into the Snow Crowns. Each family maintained a prison in its compound, where aarakocra or pterran victims were kept before being ritually murdered in the city's theater. The savage inter-family squabbles also ensured that many goblins - members of opposing families or simply vagabonds from the streets - disappeared into the family compounds.

Ghozer occasionally sparred with Basrai's halflings, especially after the aarakocra moved further up into the Snow Crowns and out of reach, but raiding Basrai never became a regular occurrence in Ghozer. The halflings had weapons the goblins didn't understand and they were numerous enough to resist the small bands a goblin family could send out on raids.

Due to its acceptance of the heretical Fire religion, Ghozer remained aloof from the other goblin cities. On the rare occasions when the city of Ruhrsar was in distress, the goblins of Ghozer took advantage, but Ghozer generally avoided significant contact with the other goblins of the Snow Crowns.

The Cleansing Wars made this isolation impossible for the goblins. The Snow Crowns became alive with refugees fleeing Daskinor's attacks, and many fled to Ghozer as the other cities fell into ruin. The largest groups of refugees came from the wrecking of Whal Khodzem and Agzhabar. Ghozer's nobles took the refugees' reports to heart and put the enslaved new arrivals to work building defenses to meet the threat.

Despite the thousands of goblin slaves worked to death digging and hefting stone for Ghozer's defenses, Daskinor's army proved too powerful. Though tired and weakened after destroying all the other goblin holds in the northern region, Daskinor's mountain men still enjoyed the advantage of potent sorcery. Fanatic resistance by goblin shamans found much less success than at Juhudhuzar (where the Clanging Gnasher had augmented the defenders), despite the fact that all three faiths labored together in the defense.

The conquest of Ghozer took Daskinor and his army less than a year, despite the city's shamans using all their powers. When Daskinor's troops broke through and began massacring the population, the shamans called forth a well of magma which they could not control, consuming more goblins than foes in the end. These priests returned as magma kraggs, taking many

goblins and humans as kragglings, which still haunt the area to this day.

Built into the side of the mountain, with various compounds of the former elemental faiths dotting the higher elevations, Ghozer had a large wall as its central defense. This wall rose 40 feet high and was 30 feet thick. However, as Daskinor knew that this was the last goblin-hold left in the north and was eager to complete his Cleansing, he and his defiler captains used vile magicks to pound holes in the walls in numerous places. Today, one can enter the city through any of the four rents in the wall.

Little of the city escaped heavy damage in the attacks. Those structures that are still stable have blasted, melted, clawed-out, and burned sections showing the carnage that occurred. In some places, the soothy silhouettes of goblins blasted by magic still adorn the walls.

Elemental worship dominated every aspect of life in Ghozer, and the city's buildings reflect that. Every standing building bears some mark of affiliation with Fire, Ash, or Earth.

No treasure remains in the open, as Daskinor's forces picked everything clean when they finished. Nothing remains that is of any value, save some possible household items that would be of use to the rare historian or antiquities dealer, or bronze tools that an expert metalworker might be able to scrap and re-forge.

The compounds of the Fire, Ash, and Earth faiths all had prisons, and each of them still has the remains of several aarakocra littering their floors. These areas might hold some interest to clerics, but otherwise have nothing of significance.

Daskinor's officers buried his army's dead in graves placed just within Ghozer's gate. Since Daskinor had divined that there were no more goblins in the north, he authorized his men to take the time and effort to inter their dead, despite normally being so desperate to get on to the next goblin hold that he would not allow proper respect for the dead.

The goblin undead in the area consist solely of kraggs and kragglings, as Daskinor took the time to completely destroy the remains of those goblins he tortured. These kraggs began their new existence when they destroyed themselves trying to drive off the Champion's forces. In the center of the city there still exists a large crater that bubbles and spews out magma. The magma does not threaten the city overall,

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but there is a small island in the middle of the crater that has a single still-living tree, a tree of life. Those explorers who survive the kraggs may discover the tree and learn to tap its power. Grakag, a goblin druid and refugee first from Whal Khodzem and then from Juhudhuzar, has merged with the tree of life. Unable to affect the outside world in any way, he remains trapped within the tree. He makes his presence known to anyone who can commune with the tree of life and will tell them what happened all those years ago. He has had thousands of years to accept his fate, and has done so, waiting either for someone to come and take these lands as their guarded lands, or for the magma to rise and release him, as it has threatened to do throughout the King's Ages since the sack of Ghozer.

The human undead of Ghozer include a wraith named Zaorth who watches over the graves of his former soldiers. He has the ability to animate the dead, and has numerous human skeletons working for him. His hatred of all things unhuman prevents him from animating the remains of any other race. A number of human kragglings also exist within the city, still under the control of the goblin kraggs that created them. Zaorth would be deeply grateful to anyone who could free them from the undead goblins' control or, failing that, put them to rest.

Cloud Chaser, an aarakocra dhaot, was a prisoner in some family's compound when the city fell under siege. Despising himself, since he was brought up to be repulsed by the undead, Cloud Chaser will aid any adventurers that agree to take his remains home so that he can find eternal rest.

### **Nidukhazi**

Due west of Kurn, on the east side of the Snow Crowns, lies Nidukhazi, the first and greatest goblin city founded in the northern region. The goblins of Nidukhazi revered Earth and Ash, the traditional goblin elemental faiths, but unlike other goblin cities, they lived under potent mindbender kings, starting with the city's founder, Goblinfather Gonngvaz. Nidukhazi gave unprecedented honor to psionics, building their psionic academy within the royal compound. The Goblinfather's purported progeny shared his gift: the royal family adopted and intermarried with goblins who exhibited great psionic talent, while royal princes of Nidukhazi who failed to master the Way lost their inheritance.

While the Goblinfather lived, Nidukhazi kept peace with its neighbors, but immediately upon his death, his

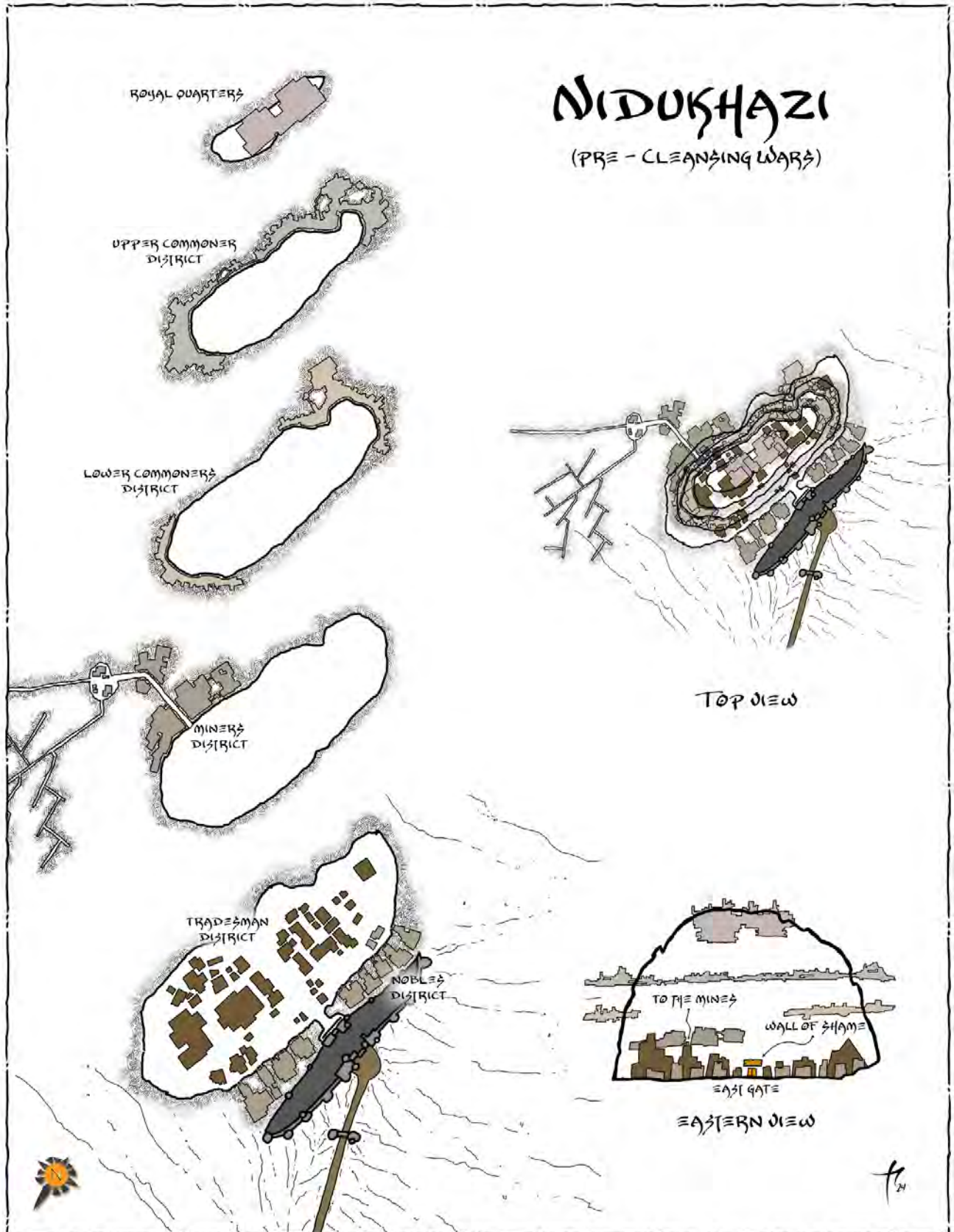
warlike scions launched war on the troll villages in the lush valley located just outside their gates, known as Goblinfather's Hollow. Fighting their neighbors helped the princes defer the question of which prince was to replace the Goblinfather; they found it much easier to maintain unity in the face of an enemy. Encountering surprising resistance from the trolls, the Nidukhazi princes spent nearly a King's Age fighting to claim the Snow Crowns for their own. Finally victorious, the princes turned their attentions to the elves of Kurn, and then to the dwarves of Hogalay, but these aggressions met with disaster. Kurnan elves slaughtered Nidukhazi's warriors in the forests, and after Hogalay's dwarves laid a ruinous siege to Nidukhazi itself, a prince styling himself Goblinfather Gonngvaz II managed to subdue his fellow princes and made peace with Kurn and Hogalay.

The "Goblinfather's peace" allowed Nidukhazi to prosper. Its position on the narrowest portion of the White Mountains, where the Snow Crowns meet the Central White Mountains, had allowed the Earth clerics to tunnel through to the western side of the mountains during the ruinous siege by Hogalay's dwarves. In peacetime, this secret western gate allowed Nidukhazi to found mining colonies such as Ruhrsar on the western side of the Snow Crowns. The goblins fancied Nidukhazi a great city and a cultural rival of Kurn and Hogalay, easily the greatest and wealthiest goblin city of the north.

As goblin refugees streamed north from the Tablelands during the Cleansing Wars, Nidukhazi first took advantage by increasing its slave population, but city priests advised King Thaghak VI that the warlord Daskinor would come in pursuit of the refugees and would destroy Nidukhazi. Imagining that closing his gates to the refugees would save Nidukhazi from Daskinor's wrath, Thaghak turned isolationist, ejecting the refugees that his city had already enslaved and deploying his armies to keep others away. When rebuffed, the refugees from the Tablelands founded Agzhabar, and Thaghak waged unrelenting war against them. Nidukhazi's elites saw themselves as different from other goblinkind, believing Daskinor would leave them alone if they disassociated themselves from the other goblins.

Daskinor and his army eventually arrived in the north, destroying Agzhabar and the goblin cities further south in the eastern Snow Crowns. Survivors of Agzhabar fled toward Nidukhazi, begging for refuge from Daskinor's pursuing army. After King Drikzhab, Thaghak's son, rejected the refugees' entreaties of

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racial brotherhood and refused them entry, Daskinor's forces arrived, massacring the survivors right in front of Nidukhazi's gate. When those who had seen the massacre from the city walls questioned their king's refusal to admit the refugees, he ordered the dissenters—including his own sister — walled into the deepest caverns of the city and left to asphyxiate. While King Drikzhab's guards walled off hundreds of his own subjects, the remainder of the city's army fought off the first assaults of Daskinor's legions.

Nidukhazi resisted Daskinor for seven years, but eventually the human soldiers built a great ramp to the city's ancient and heavily fortified gates. Despite heavy casualties, the invaders finally breached the gates and glorious Nidukhazi fell. King Drikzhab died gallantly in the last assault, buying time for hundreds of his people to escape through the western tunnel.

Over the King's Ages, mudslides and rockfalls have obscured Nidukhazi's battlements, and weeds and secondary growth have crept over the mud and stone. Nonetheless, skilled observers who know what to look for, and who take the time for close study, can pick out the outlines of stone walls and ancient rounded towers against the stark cliff, found slightly below the tree line.

Small trees and shrubs have eroded the earthen ramp Daskinor's men laboriously constructed, making footing treacherous. Scenes of devastation lie behind the accumulated rubble of rockslides and Nidukhazi's broken gates. To take advantage of the view, Nidukhazi's mindbending elite built their mansions against the outer wall, and as such many of the city's most powerful psions fought here to defend their homes. The melted and shattered walls testify to the powerful psionic and magic energies unleashed here as Daskinor's army burst in. Since Nidukhazi's common folk had little more than hand tools for defense, the city's miners' and commoners' districts - located west and above the gates - still maintain some structural integrity. Smashed open and blood-stained, these small commoner dwellings still contain a few items of value to explorers from a metal-poor era – a copper pot here, a piece of heavy silver jewelry there, many carelessly dropped on the floor.

Built a level up from the homes of Nidukhazi's commoners and nobles alike, the Royal Quarter overlooks the great vaulted cavern that the rest of the city borders on. King Drikzhab and many of his relatives, all potent users of the Way, made their last stand here. Psionics and magic destroyed much of the palace, and large sections of it crashed down onto the

tradesman's district below, killing hundreds of Daskinor's own troops. Some sections of the palace, built deeper into the rock, still stand. King Drikzhab survived the ruin of his palace, and with his sons and royal guards, fought his way to the farthest reaches of Nidukhazi, deep within the mountains, where he barricaded himself in the Shrine of the Goblinfather. Here, in the most sacred place in the White Mountains for goblinkind, Drikzhab held out for over a day against the combined assault of Daskinor's legions. When the human troops finally broke in past the bronze gates of the Shrine, King Drikzhab met his end. Nyegdiv, one of Daskinor's favorites, slew Drikzhab before the sarcophagus of the Goblinfather himself. Daskinor's troops looted the Shrine of all that they saw as valuable, stripping the rich gold overlay from the Goblinfather's fat marble and gold statue and reducing the magnificent pagoda-like structure of the Shrine to a pile of logs. They left the broken bronze doors, and despite three millennia of corrosion, some metal remains salvageable. Kurn's Great Library would pay up to 10,000 ceramic pieces for the fragments of the marble statue and the Shrine logs, if delvers were able to reconstruct them from the debris scattered among the bones of the fallen.

Significant loot remains in Nidukhazi, since the length of the siege gave its inhabitants plenty of time to hide and bury their valuables. Shocked to discover the western tunnel, and furious that thousands of goblins had escaped through it while his troops were battling in the shrine of the Goblinfather, Daskinor gave his men little time to loot. Few goblins managed to return to the city to retrieve their goods after Daskinor's forces left the city, since the undead known as Daskinor's castaways made it unsafe for goblins to return. The bulk of the hidden goblin treasure is silver, particularly the heavy jewelry favored by goblin women.

Like most other goblin ruins, Nidukhazi is populated by a great many goblin undead, but lacks any flesh worms. Enraged that so many goblins escaped to the west, Daskinor took little time torturing the survivors to death, instead forcing his army to leave Nidukhazi before they could even finish looting the ruins. Rather, the city is haunted by a large number of racked spirits - those goblins who were forced to watch as their fellow goblins were massacred by Daskinor just outside the city gates, only to then be buried alive themselves at their king's command. The racked spirits make regular pilgrimages to the Wall of Shame, located above Nidukhazi's east gate, the place from



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which Nidukhazi's goblins watched Daskinor massacre the southern refugees.

Daskinor's castaways in Nidukhazi include Nyegdiv, the soldier who killed King Drikzhab. A stray arrow slew Nyegdiv in his moment of triumph; he returned to life as a fallen and haunts the ruins, commanding a few wraiths and a small army of skeletons, which he leads in battles against the undead goblins in the ruins. This battle continues to this day, as neither side can effectively destroy the other. So they fight, reliving the battle that began three thousand years earlier.

### **Ruhrsar**

The ruins of Ruhrsar, a small goblin city devastated by other goblins during the Time of Magic, lie southwest of Ghozer in the west-facing Snow Crowns. Ruhrsar was founded in the late Green Age by colonists from Nidukhazi - located on the east side of the Snow Crowns - after a wandering Earth priest divined small silver ore deposits here.

The colonists from Nidukhazi dug their city like a mine, working narrow tunnels deep into the mountains. As each tunnel reached the silver veins, it would branch upwards and downwards. Ruhrsar smelted its own ore in large furnaces built inside the mountains near the tunnel entrances. Earth clerics broke fissures in the rocks to vent smoke and dump slag.

During the colony's brief existence (three King's Ages), Ruhrsar exported considerable silver to the mother city. Ruhrsar's successive princes built themselves a sumptuous palace in the upper levels of the colony, with louvered windows that looked west out onto the Rohorind Forest.

Ruhrsar indulged in regular skirmishes with local pterrans and aarakocra but, despite such distractions and the difficulties of controlling the slave labor sent from Nidukhazi to mine the silver, the colony still ran efficiently.

Ruhrsar's fortune did not last. In the worst winter of the 144th King's Age, an avalanche buried the colony's only gate. Trying to melt their way out, the goblins burned all of their wood and many of the slaves who operated the smelters. The ruling prince died while suppressing a bloody slave revolt, but the carnage seemed to save the city from starvation and asphyxiation, as the diminished population resorted to cannibalism until finally digging their way clear.

The starved and freezing survivors of Ruhrsar's ordeal then sealed their own doom by sending emissaries to the nearest city in search of help. The rulers of Ghozer, who had known for years of Ruhrsar's existence but had avoided attacking it lest they bring down the wrath of Nidukhazi on themselves, sensed an opportunity. The forces of Ghozer used teleportation to enter the city, but the expedition leader summoned a creature that ultimately doomed both sides. Originally set loose in the mine shafts, this "cloud of death" went from place to place, killing and absorbing those it came into contact with. This creature - a crimson - remains dormant in Ruhrsar to this day.

At present, one could reach the ruins if the rubble beneath the collapsed watchtower were cleared. A creature called a worm of bones guards this entrance, keeping the city free of looters and vandals. The silver that caused the city's founding and destruction still awaits discovery within. The goblins cast the silver in hexagonal bars four inches thick and nearly a foot long, weighing 10 pounds each.

The palace compound has a small store of magical and psionic items, some of which are weapons and armor, and most connected to the faith of Earth. When the attack came, the prince was one of the first to be taken by the crimson, and was turned into a wraith. The prince still haunts the city today, counting and recounting his silver and other riches.

Careful explorers may also find value in the smelting rooms. Interested only in the silver, the goblins left the smelted slag on the mountainside, oozing out of the tunnels. With the proper knowledge and equipment, one could extract hundreds of pounds of copper from the tons of slag.

### **Uzhdra**

Nestled in a wide valley southwest of Whal Khodzem is the gate to another goblin ruin, the Green Age city of Uzhdra. Founded by Fire worshippers who were banished from Whal Khodzem in the Green Age, Uzhdra attracted repeated attacks from Whal Khodzem and Juhudhuzar, all eager to extinguish its heretics. Uzhdra's defenders fought valiantly, however, repelling the yearly attacks for King's Ages.

But Uzhdra's location, with its gate opening onto a wide and fertile valley, meant that the fanatical Ash and Earth crusaders from Whal Khodzem and Juhudhuzar could camp immediately outside the city's gates and launch their assaults. To overcome this disadvantage, the goblins of Uzhdra created several

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postern gates on the shoulders of the valley, using these for sorties against their attackers.

Uzhdra's enemies were disorganized. The warriors of Ash and Earth, led by their priests, frequently fought one another, and expeditions sent by Whal Khodzem and Juhudhuzar often fought each other instead of attacking Uzhdra. Uzhdra's goblins exploited these frictions - as well as their postern gates and other tactics - to survive, but one year the commander of Juhudhuzar's spring expedition developed a new plan.

This commander, a powerful warrior named Shafghaza, dominated the priests in his army by sheer force of personality. He had the Earth clerics bury the main gate of Uzhdra with a series of avalanches, and had the Ash clerics lay waste to the valley around the gate, reducing its forests to fields of smoking ash. Then he withdrew his army beyond the valley, watching and waiting.

Uzhdra's Fire worshippers sent scouts and search parties out of their postern gates, attempting to find the invaders. Instead, they found a wasteland and Shafghaza's carefully hidden spies mapped the locations of as many postern gates as they could. One by one, these were sealed by Shafghaza's Earth priests, while his troops fell upon Uzhdra's scouts, hunting them down.

The skirmishes, and the sealing of Uzhdra's many hidden posterns, took more than six months. But Shafghaza's vigilance was rewarded - the inhabitants of Uzhdra gradually consumed all their stockpiled food, and suffered hideously from depleted air. Shafghaza intended to remain outside Uzhdra for several more months, but his soldiers were restless, and the clan chiefs back in Juhudhuzar were impatient to get their clansmen back.

Still, Shafghaza would have persevered had not the yearly force from Whal Khodzem arrived. A pitched battle ensued, which Shafghaza won, but in the fight his troops suffered tremendous casualties and the commander was obliged to leave Uzhdra and return to Juhudhuzar with the survivors. The chiefs of several of the clans that lost the most warriors in the battle with Whal Khodzem's army had Shafghaza subsequently poisoned.

Despite the destruction of Whal Khodzem's yearly invasion force, and the long-awaited withdrawal of Shafghaza's army, there was little celebration in Uzhdra. Few goblins survived there, since cannibalism and the lack of breathable air had left the city nearly depopulated. The few hundred emaciated survivors

crawled out of the last unburied postern gate and scattered into the mountains, where most of them died in the snow.

The wreck of Uzhdra, never taken by assault but starved into submission, remained abandoned for King's Ages. However, legends of the city remained current among the goblins of the Snow Crowns, and the fate of Fire-loving Uzhdra became a cautionary tale with which to frighten doubters among the faiths of Earth and Ash back to the fold. The actual site of the ruins was lost to all but a few, however, and the fact that a gate remained by which one could enter the city was unknown to any goblins.

Nonetheless, during the Cleansing Wars, some bands of refugees fleeing the wreck of Whal Khodzem sought out Uzhdra's tunnels, hoping to hide there from Daskinor's wrath. They never intended to stay in such an unhallowed place, but instead hoped to stop there and recover their strength for the journey to what they hoped was safety in the cities of the western slopes.

At least two bands of refugees actually found the valley outside Uzhdra, and one of them discovered the postern gate. This small band rested in the outer halls of the city, but only until the snows melted. These goblins went no further into the ruins than necessary, from fear of the religious taboos declared by their priests - the latter considering the entire area unclean, since it had once been consecrated to the infidel faith of Fire.

When the refugees left, they closed the postern gate behind them and concealed it as best they could. Despite the taint of heresy, the ruins had provided them with a bolthole once and might do so again, so the goblins took care to leave the area secure. In any event, they never did return to Uzhdra's dark corridors, and the postern gate has remained closed ever since.

Today, Uzhdra remains overgrown with scrub grass and vines, and various unseen holes provide entrance into the city. The entrances have some signs of use, as this area was a way station for refugees, but they stayed within sight of the exits.

Little treasure exists here, since survivors had time to collect their valuables. A careful search may reveal a few coins, and perhaps an item or two of value, but the time spent searching would not be worth the find - Uzhdra was never a metal-rich city.

The central areas of Uzhdra have been long abandoned, their dusty floors undisturbed but for the

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footprints of a few adventurous young whippersnappers from among the Whal Khodzem refugees, who nevertheless did not venture far.

In the depths of the city lies a series of catacombs housing the dead, where all the bodies are blackened and charred skeletons, having observed the funeral rites of the Fire worshipers. The Fire temple remains intact, with a single magical flame lighting its hall. There is nothing of value here, and the area is desolate, quiet, and unnerving.

### **Whal Khodzem**

The second city of goblins founded in the White Mountains, Whal Khodzem was renowned for its large temples, built of fine black stone and chased with locally mined copper. Located east of Basrai, on the eastern slopes of the Snow Crowns, it was founded early in the Green Age, primarily by colonists from Nidukhazi.

Whal Khodzem's advantages in minerals did not overcome or even temper the violence and savagery of its goblin population. The city fought repeated wars with other goblin states and with Hoyalay's dwarves. Battles with other goblin cities continued until Daskinor came, but Whal Khodzem suffered such pronounced defeats at the hands of Hoyalay's dwarves that the city's warlords were overthrown by popular revolt and the city was controlled thereafter by its leading priests – whose first act was to swear eternal peace with Hoyalay.

The city was run by a theocracy of Earth and Ash priests, though the Earth priests claimed pride of place. At first the hierarchies of these two traditional goblin faiths ruled by consensus, and with considerable responsibility (for goblins). It was during this period that the Clanging Gnasher appeared.

Over the King's Ages, the priests gradually broke up into factions, and their religious mission was completely discredited. The rites of the Clanging Gnasher became rote, and the artifact's gifts of power were reduced as the clerics' devotion to the faith declined. A few Earth clerics remained deeply devoted to the faith, but these were ignored or muzzled by the hierarchy.

Psionics was declared heretical by the Earth and Ash prelates, and was also suppressed. However, there was an underground psionics organization whose members had grown widespread by the end of the Time of Magic. Even so, few mindbenders in Whal

Khodzem became powerful due to lack of advanced training.

During the Cleansing Wars, Whal Khodzem accepted many refugees from the south, enslaving them and employing them to build its fortifications, but the resulting defenses and preparations were too late. The various factions within the Earth and Ash hierarchies argued interminably about the defensive program, and progress was slow. Whal Khodzem was the first goblin city Daskinor and his army discovered when they marched north, and the improved defenses were still incomplete when the Champion's army attacked.

The attack took a year to break through the exterior walls and terraces. Even then, the breach in the defenses occurred not because of overwhelming force but because the priests on duty at the Fangmaw Tower fell into a disagreement about whose responsibility it was to man the battlements, and finally neither faith's representatives would take their places. Daskinor's scouts reported the lapse, and the Champion led a furious assault that took the tower by storm.

Fangmaw Tower was the key to the goblins' outer works. With its commanding views in enemy hands, the defenders of Whal Khodzem were forced to withdraw inside the city. Daskinor's troops pursued, and there was desperate fighting throughout the city itself. The Earth and Ash faiths, riven by factions, provided no leadership during the crisis and lost the chance to hold the inner gates because of it.

Despite the cowardice and confusion of the senior clergy of both faiths, some of the younger Earth clerics put up a fanatic resistance to Daskinor's attack. A knot of senior defilers, led by T'az'ra of the Gold Robe, finally broke through the cordon of goblin clerics, but not before the clerics, buoyed by the power of the Clanging Gnasher, had fought long enough to allow some goblins to escape.

Escaping goblins fled west to Juhudhuzar. Two particular refugees, Ezgruz and Tvakch, a pair of fanatic Earth clerics who safeguarded the Clanging Gnasher, found themselves particularly welcomed in Juhudhuzar. The artifact and its bearers revitalized the Juhudhuzar's defensive efforts.

Whal Khodzem's ruins offer a stark reminder of the horrors of the Cleansing Wars: Daskinor left the burnt-out hulk of Fangmaw Tower standing to remind other goblins that he would come, no matter what defensive structures they put in his way.

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The city's undead include three khvakhas, none of whom can maintain command of the city for more than a week, a once-human wraith who maintains the watch at Fangmaw Tower, and numerous flesh worms.

A variety of baubles, mostly copper jewelry - heavy ostentatious jewelry preferred by Whal Khodzem's war chiefs and powerful women - can still be found among the ruins.

### Thorlo

On the southeast coast of Shevgar's Promontory, hidden between the Wraithrocks and the Silt Sea, sprawl the ruins of Thorlo's city and harbor. A recent Tyr-storm washed out many of Thorlo's streets while revealing a patchwork of battered and broken ochre-red tile roofs long buried by silt and sand. Travelers approaching from the landward side must wade through dust up to chest deep, climb through twisted rocks, and crest a small rise. From that small hill, travelers can look down on scattered roofs, some of which provide ingress to Thorlo's ruins.

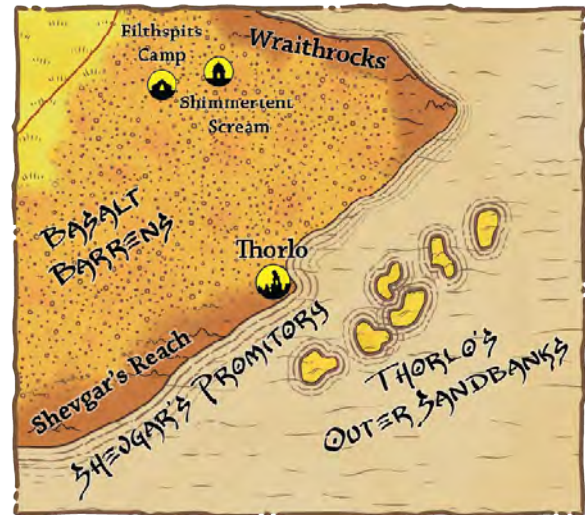
Although abandoned by the living since the Cleansing Wars, Thorlo remains occupied by many denizens, who still protect its secrets and treasures. Explorers will find the city is currently about half-excavated. Thorlo was designed as a rough semicircle, oriented to the north-northeast, with its breakwater and walls protecting its landward side and seawalls lining its coast. The city grew up around a deep harbor whose mouth was too wide for gates or towers to enclose. Today the western half of the city's semicircular hollow remains beneath silt and sand, while the eastern half, including most of the harbor, has largely been washed out by the Tyr-storm.

### Thorlo's History

Populated largely by humans during the Time of Magic, Thorlo's excellent harbor position and its trade connections with the great city of Eresat to the north brought prosperity and influence to Thorlo's inhabitants. Ships laden with Thorlo's grain, fruit, lumber, glasswork, and pottery departed north to Eresat, south as far as Giustenal, and east to forgotten islands in what was then the Sunrise Sea.

Thorlo's human king took advice from a council of noble families. The chief priests of the city's temples, including Water, Air, and Rain, joined with the Grand Prexy of Thorlo's small but well-regarded psionic academy to form an additional advisory body, as did the syndicate of the city's wealthiest trading families.

Thorlo remained smaller and more vulnerable than Eresat, yet valuable enough to draw constant lizardfolk attacks. Twice massing to pillage Thorlo



during the Time of Magic, lizardfolk nearly destroyed it in the second attack.

Thorlo's human and elf inhabitants were slow to adopt arcane magic. Their reverence for the elements, particularly Water, made wizardry seem less significant that it was in other cities. By the time Thorlo had a significant preserver community, warnings of the Preserver Jihad arrived and sorcery became forbidden on pain of death. Thus, Thorlo was spared the troubles of the Preserver Jihad.

After an earthquake devastated Eresat, lizardfolk asappes migrated south to assault Thorlo, the largest remaining air breather city on the northern coast. Desperate, Thorlo's King Ungild VI pressed giants from nearby islands into the city's army as mamluks. The mamluks eventually came to dominate the city's military, becoming so embedded in the city's political structure that every noble family and trade house depended on them.

If Athas can be defined by a single truism, it might well be power corrupts. At least, that was the case with the giant mamluks of Thorlo. With the ordinary inhabitants of the city totally reliant upon them for protection, the mamluks slowly extended their authority over the royal family, the military, and the rest of the city until eventually the giant leadership determined that if they were the true power of Thorlo,

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then they should be recognised as such. Moving swiftly, the giants swarmed out of their barracks and seized control of the Telibandrum, and King Esdigird was forced to acquiesce to the mamluks' demands after his wife and children were taken hostage.

Led by the king's advisors, Thorlo's priests and psions staged a counterattack, attempting to lead the citizenry in ousting the giants; the city's few preservers even came out of hiding to join the struggle. However, the "Spellcasters' Rebellion" failed: the giants' grip on the city was too strong and the citizens feared that expelling the giants would weaken the city against the lizardfolk threat. Only the priests, mindbenders, and preservers fought back. However, the Water Temple, led by High Diviner Ussroas (himself a distant relative of the king), refused to assist, fatally weakening the insurgency. Deeply loyal to the royal family and the king, Ussroas refused to act against those who held them hostage. When King Esdigird condemned the rebellion, the Water priests returned to their temples. While the Water priests prayed, the other priests and mindbenders died fighting the giants.

The giants ruled Thorlo through the human royal family, using them as figureheads for increasingly oppressive enslavement. Enslaved former citizens built palaces for the giants and otherwise labored to enrich their new giant masters. Many Water priests, including Ussroas, collaborated with the giants, and the giants forbade worship of other elements. Only a handful of Water priests refused to acquiesce to the new order.

One survivor from the Spellcasters' Rebellion, a human Rain priest named Togovas, was so disillusioned by his faith's failure and the Water priesthood's betrayal that he apostatized from Rain and became a Fire priest, leaving Thorlo to gather a great following in the northern plains. The elves expelled Togovas and his followers from Kurn, thinking him just one more human warlord, and Hoyalay's Earth theocracy also refused him sanctuary, but Togovas finally found success with a group of primitive pterrans migrating into the region. Mustering his new followers, Togovas marched on Thorlo intent on vanquishing the giants and punishing the treacherous Water priests.

Togovas laid siege for three-years. Eventually Thorlo's people, desperate to escape slavery to the giants, rebelled inside the walls. The Water priesthood stood divided, with many finally fighting with the rebels. After the giants killed the king to prevent him from

joining the rebels, citizens rallied and – at terrible cost - opened the gates to Togovas's army.

Victorious, Togovas used his pterrann Fire priests to keep the survivors from abandoning the wrecked city. Despite renewed lizardfolk attacks and raids by those giants who escaped back to their swampy islands after the battle, Togovas managed to partially rebuild. But the people of Thorlo spurned the Fire faith and resented the pterrann outsiders, and Thorlo never regained its vitality or its prosperity. Once word of the Cleansing Wars reached the city, racial factioning plunged the city into civil war. The survivors scattered from Thorlo's ruins.

Following the abandonment of Thorlo by its remaining citizens, only a handful of the living stayed behind. Togovas and Ussroas stayed, leading their dwindling forces as they sought to refight old battles. The corpses of the dead strewn among the ruins were quickly animated by both sides. None in Thorlo remember when exactly the two high priests died and became undead themselves; it's doubtful the pair even noticed their own deaths, so obsessed were they with avenging themselves on each other.

Lizardfolk camped in the bay for several King's Ages, arriving early in the Cleansing Wars and picking over the ruins for valuables and any scavengers they might find edible. Their arrival in the bay provoked a savage response from the undead factions. Both sides hated the invaders, but their retort was disjointed and haphazard, and the undead only managed to restrict the lizardfolk to the eastern half of the city. When Keltis came and wiped out the lizardfolk invaders, the undead stayed out of sight, resuming their feud after the Champion's departure. Yet even these undead fanatics weren't oblivious to the changing world; as the silt claimed Thorlo, both sides' activities began to slow, spending longer and longer periods in repose.

### **Thorlo Today**

Two years ago, the first and, to date, only Tyr-storm to strike the Trembling Plains area blew away King's Ages of accumulated dust and sand from Thorlo's ruins. Now, some of the roofs of the city's giant palaces and walls once again protrude above the washes of silt and sand. Recent winds have bored passages through the shifting sands into the cyclopean ruins and the human-sized dwellings below. Literally built for giants, some of Thorlo's buildings will astonish those bold enough to explore its mud-encrusted streets. The

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giant conquerors razed Thorlo's original human-scale palaces and had them rebuilt to a giant scale.

Attentive explorers will notice that the dried mud in Thorlo's streets is far from undisturbed. Shuffling tracks, footprints, and skeletal imprints are everywhere. These come from the scores of walking dead that stalk Thorlo's shattered streets. Most are gangs of undead humans and elves who died as slaves under the giants' regime, or during Togovas' siege or subsequent civil wars, but groups of undead pterranean soldiers also roam the streets. Some of these groups clash in the streets periodically, since many of them retain memories of hatred for the beings who killed or oppressed them, or who adhered to an opposing faith.

The Tyr-storm that uncovered Thorlo's eastern half also awoke the factions of undead within the city. Both Togovas and Ussroas have marshaled their forces and rebuilt their territories, preparing for 'one last push' to eliminate each other. The irony is that neither priest is a servant of their claimed patron element anymore. Exactly when the two inadvertently turned from Fire and Water is unclear, but by the time both had arisen as undead and were animating large numbers of undead, they had certainly forsaken their elemental pacts.

Today, Togovas believes he still faithfully serves the forces of elemental Fire. In reality, the beings that whisper to him are from the Paraelemental Plane of Magma. They intend to corrupt the *Brazier of Everburning Flame*, and have their puppet extend the volcanic activity of the Charvass Peninsula up into Shevgar's Promontory. If their plans come to fruition, a coastline of volcanic fire will illuminate the night for leagues around. For his part, Ussroas has fallen in with a being of paraelemental Rain. Believing it to be a vengeful Water spirit, Ussroas sees the power of Tyr-storms as evidence of Water's supremacy and its ability to scour the impure from *his* city.

Due to their delusions, both priests extend full hospitality to any priests of Fire, and Water, respectively, who enter the ruins. However, attentive visitors will soon note the corrupted nature of the rituals and blessings that Togovas and Ussroas employ. Their command of undead forces will also likely cause true elemental clerics to recoil in revulsion. Soon enough, both will surely turn on their 'heretical' guests. Despite their current allegiances, worshippers of Magma or Rain can expect no favor from the mad undead priests.

As much as both priests believe Thorlo is theirs, there are other factions that are active within the city. King Burdinas and his dwarven bodyguard have also awoken from their slumber under the Telibandrum. The royal meorty despises the wayward priests who, in his ageless opinion, brought ruin upon his city. At present, his forces are too small to combat the larger groups directly, but modern day adventurers who encounter the King beneath his palace might find gainful employment, or at least a place of respite.

Further complicating matters are the uncontrolled undead that still populate the city. As much as Togovas and Ussroas believe they control most of the ruined city's undead, the truth is that their combined forces account for perhaps half the total number of undead in Thorlo. Bands of roaming undead wander the streets, while the occasional undead giant can be found in repose beneath the ruins of buildings. Burdinas is morally opposed to controlling the former citizens of his realm, but he may soon have no choice but to start bringing these independent groups under his rule.

While the city's outer buildings remain buried in sand, winds have revealed two giant-sized palaces near the city center: the Telibandrum and the Gregzor.

## **Places of Interest**

### **The Telibandrum**

The Telibandrum stands on the edge of the harbor. Once its walls reared up from glittering waves; today, the walls overlook a thin crust of brittle mud, overlaying loose silt below. The crusted mud is likely thick enough to support small creatures – such as halflings or tari – but may not support creatures much heavier than a human or a dwarf. The Telibandrum's beige stone wall connects a series of six circular minarets, three of which are still intact, the remainder broken at various heights. Of the flying bridges linking the towers, four remain, though without the sand to shelter them from the wind and weather, other towers and bridges may soon fall.

The Telibandrum's great gate faces the harbor, where a water gate allowed ships to enter the palace courtyard. The giants reoriented the palace in a deliberate effort to show that they did not fear the lizardfolk, as their human predecessors had. Inside, the Telibandrum stands four giant-scale stories tall,

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every level ringing the same central courtyard with a line of elegant arcades. Royal chambers and audience halls fill the vast spaces, and the basement is full of treasure chambers.

Shortly after the Tyr-storm exposed the Telibandrum, marauding silt runners looted the upper halls, but the palace's undead promptly drove the raiders off. These undead include the meorty of the last human king before the giants took over, King Burdinas I. He commands the loyalty of a dozen dwarven banshees, his faithful bodyguards who defend their sovereign even beyond the grave. Burdinas and his guards refer to silt runners and pterrans as "lizardmen", unable to fathom that they could be anything else.

Before old age could claim his life, Burdinas elected to become the first (and only) meorty of Thorlo. The oaths and foci of his personal bodyguard led to them committing ritual suicide so that they could accompany their liege in the long eternity of his undeath. Resting in the basement catacombs of the Telibandrum, Burdinas appeared only when needed by his descendants.

The Telibandrum's basement remains at a human scale, untouched by the giants' efforts to renovate the palace to suit their needs. When the former mamluks press-ganged humans to rebuild the Telibandrum, attempting to demolish the center of the basement to create the water gate and anchorage, Burdinas and his undead intervened, fiercely driving out the laborers. Now, the crypts beneath the palace are one of the few places in Thorlo that contain treasures predating the giant occupation. These treasures include elegant multicolored glass sculptures depicting long-vanished sea creatures, fine outfits of silver disks worn by the queens and princesses, storied weapons of royalty, magical rings, and psionic toys of long-dead noble children.

### **The Gregzor**

During Thorlo's heyday, the Gregzor was the city arsenal and bastion, serving as headquarters of the city military. Early in its history, a powerful lizardfolk attack reached the very gates of the citadel before the city's marshal decapitated the invaders' leader - a massive and cunning lizardfolk named Gregzor - and repelled the assault. In the aftermath, the arsenal became known as 'Gregzor's Folly', and then eventually just 'The Gregzor'.

Situated next to the mamluk barracks, the Gregzor was taken swiftly when the giants rose up, its defenders

slaughtered to a man. Garrisoned by a small unit of former mamluks during the period of giant rule, the Gregzor fell to Togovas, his fire priests, and their pterrann followers when he finally took the city. Stationing some of his most loyal followers in the fortress, Togovas used it and them to aid his control of Thorlo, unleashing fiery destruction from the tower rooftops. The pterrans, for their part, used the Gregzor as a repository for the wealth that they plundered from the city's inhabitants.

The Gregzor stands on the city's landward side, near the center of the city. Its giant square towers rear up from the massive structure, its walls and many small arrow-slit-type windows chipped, cracked, and scarred by fire. Two of the Gregzor's towers are intact and offer an excellent vantage point across the city.

Scores of pterrann undead inhabit the Gregzor, the last defenders of the fortress from the raging mobs that attempted to overthrow Togovas' tyranny when word of the Cleansing Wars reached the city and sparked civil war. The pterrans protect a wealth of jewelry and fine fixtures, such as copper wall sconces decorated in flame motifs. They attack anyone who attempts to enter the barred (but broken) palace gate. A Fire priest, or perhaps a fast-talking pterrann, might be able to convince them not to attack.

### **Giant Barracks**

A massive, giant-sized barracks sits just west of the Gregzor. The square barracks compound was purpose built for the mamluks when they came into Thorlo's service, and everything about the barracks compound and its buildings is giant-sized - from the doorways to the latrines. The barracks, smithy, refectory hall, and outbuildings are all single story structures, but single story for giants, which means 30' tall. The curtain wall surrounding the compound is likewise 30' tall, with squat towers rising 60' over the city at each corner and at the gatehouse.

The barracks is home to only a few undead giants, including one fiercely cruel sergeant whose self-indulgent brutality and penchant for eating rebellious Thorls brought him back to unlife as a fael.

### **Togovas' Twice-Damned Fire Temple**

In ancient times, before Thorlo became a mighty city, a small spring bubbled up near the coast and attracted human settlers. With a supply of fresh water from the

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spring (tended by clerics of Water), fertile fishing grounds off the coast, and abundant natural resources, the crude settlement soon became a village, then a port town, then a city. As Thorlo grew in size and wealth, so too did the Water temple that marked the site of Thorlo's foundation. Each time it was expanded, the temple maintained its facing towards the sea and its bountiful waters, and by the late Green Age, the city's Temple of Water sat in the center of Thorlo, with the Gregzor situated to the west of it.

When Togovas conquered the city, he ritually desecrated the sacred spring and then did the same to the fane around it. He and his followers destroyed or defaced every last symbol of elemental Water within its precincts, and then Togovas reconsecrated the site to the glory of his patron. Elemental Fire now ostensibly rules from the once great temple, with Togovas and his followers tending the *Brazier of Everburning Flame*, stolen from Thorlo's lighthouse when they captured the city.

### **The Palladian Basilica**

After Togovas' conquest, the surviving Water clerics were forced into hiding, where they continued to scheme to reclaim their main temple. For now, however, they remain in exile in the Palladian Basilica, a colonnaded three-story former clearing house used by traders. The Basilica survived the wars relatively intact; its grayish stone cracked but still generally sound. It stands on the harbor, and indeed several of the stone quays come right up to the northern side of the building, so merchants could more easily unload their cargoes. The Basilica today is half-exposed, its eastern side scoured clean of silt by the Tyr-storm. Ussroas and his staff have cleaned off the resulting mud, and now the building almost sparkles - Ussroas has decided he will hide no more.

Today the clerics of Water include a motley collection of thinking zombies, wraiths, and other undead, led by Ussroas. Ussroas and his followers lair in the city's former marketplace, where they have made a Water chapel, centered on a small trickling spring they dug King's Ages' ago.

Ussroas and his followers possess the *Waveglass*, an opalescent crystal in which the shimmering waves of the Sunrise Sea still ebb and flow. The *Waveglass* is a powerful Water artifact, permitting the undead clerics to combine their spells for much more powerful effects. Its protective aura also keeps all Fire-aligned beings out of the Palladian Basilica and grants Ussroas limited

powers to control Water-aligned beings should any appear in Thorlo. If visitors approach Ussroas, he and his followers will try to enlist their help to fight Togovas.

### **Lesser Water Temple**

At the far eastern end of the harbor, unearthed by the Tyr-storm, stands Thorlo's lesser Water temple. A domed edifice built right on what was then the water, this satellite of the main temple ministered to the fishermen and sailors of the city. Before heading out onto the waves, these sailors would make offerings to the powers of Water for safe journeys and good catches of fish. Due to its limited political importance and the effect it had on the morale of the sailors, it was ignored by the giants when they took over the city. However, during the civil war, Togovas' zealots sacked the temple and cast it down. Since the Tyr-storm, the temple has been rebuilt by its sole remaining occupant - a raaig and former priest of Water. Having abandoned the elements altogether, this apostate spirit zealously defends his domain, aided by the mummified sharks he keeps as pets.

### **Other Places of Interest**

Winds may uncover other buildings and places of interest in Thorlo, or PCs and NPCs may excavate to discover them:

- Several sunken ships litter the harbor, the tips of their masts now protruding from the mud-encrusted silt. One of these ships is still manned by undead lizardfolk raiders, universally hated by all other undead in the city.
- A former Air temple, just beyond the unearthed area, still lies buried. It houses an artifact, the *Monstrance of the Winds*, which was of no interest to the Fire or Water faiths, but which might be valuable to the Air-worshippers of the modern Trembling Plains (see the adventure hook "Monstrance of the Winds" in *FFN* for more details).
- The former psionic academy and temple to a massive sea monster (now an incorporeal undead puddingfish, still guarding the temple).
- The shattered remains of Thorlo's lighthouse, now barely visible above the silt. The lighthouse's last keeper still vainly tries to keep a fire lit at its top, and would give anything to have the *Brazier of Everburning Flame* returned to him.



# Zhavahr

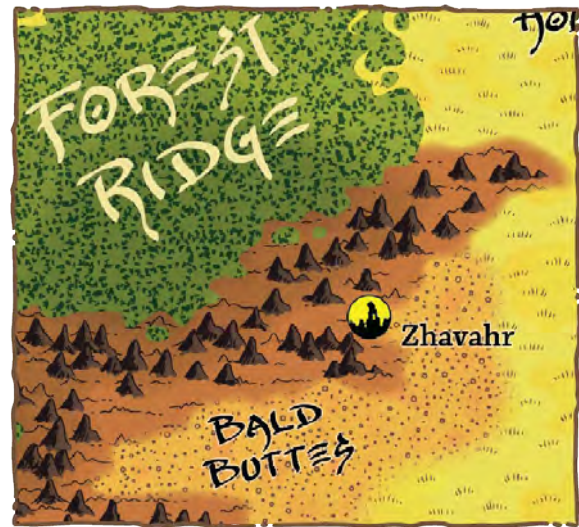
The ruined fortress of Zhavahr is a goblin edifice dating back to the middle of the Cleansing Wars. During the Green Age, the rock spire served as the northern watchpost of Zhahudzuzar, a great goblin kingdom that dominated the northern Ringing Mountains. A psionically empowered beacon of light shone from its peak, warning all others that they were approaching the border of the Grand Magnate's domain. In those days, the spire was home to a small garrison of goblins who patrolled the northern border of Zhahudzuzar, and protected the tax inspectors and customs agents who levied duties on travelers entering or leaving the realm.

After Daskinor had cleansed Ulyan, he made his way to the teeming goblin holds of the Ringing Mountains. The progress of his armies was slow to begin with; the goblins had many settlements throughout the length of the mountain chain, and they were experienced in the ways of war, having fought with neighboring dwarf, gnome, and aarakocra communities - not to mention other goblin realms - since time immemorial.

Despite Daskinor's frustration at the slow pace (and the execution of several of his generals), the Goblin Death's forces refined their tactics, gained experience of their own, and increasingly relied upon defilers to breach the goblin holds. Although well practiced in the psionic arts, and deeply committed to the worship of the Elements, the goblins were never great practitioners of arcane magic. This weakness was ruthlessly exploited by Daskinor.

The effect of Daskinor's conquests was a steady stream of goblin refugees heading north, seeking refuge in the other great goblin realms of the Ringing Mountains. Many of these refugees were enslaved in the cities they fled to, only to again flee when that settlement was conquered in turn. In the north, Grand Magnate Uruzhad XII paid attention to the tidings these refugees bore. As city after city fell before the Goblin Death, the Grand Magnate realized it was a matter of when, not if, Zhahudzuzar itself would fall.

In an act of remarkable foresight (especially for a goblin), Grand Magnate Uruzhad designated his realm as a safe haven for any and all goblin refugees: females and children would be escorted safely to the White Mountains in the north, provided that all able bodied males provided three months of labor erecting new defensive works for Zhahudzuzar. Zhavahr was designated the launch point for the caravans to the



goblin cities of the White Mountains, but it was also designed as the final redoubt for the goblins of the Ringing Mountains. Even as Daskinor's forces approached the realm's southern borders, the spire of Zhavahr was being hollowed out, walls were being erected around it, and magical and psionic defenses were being put in place.

The conquest of Zhahudzuzar and its holdings took Daskinor nearly a decade. The goblins held the line against the Goblin Death's forces for as long as possible, bleeding their enemy white. Just before a defensive situation became untenable, the goblin defenders would retreat to their next bastion, to begin the process anew. Just as Daskinor had used smaller goblin settlements as a means of bleeding his armies, so too did Uruzhad use the southern bastions to temper goblin soldiers, priests, and mindbenders into a formidable force. By the time Daskinor flung down the gates of Great Zhahudzuzar itself, all he found was a grand city empty of all save the most menial of tools and a host of booby traps.

Over the decade of outright war between Daskinor's Cleansing army and Zhahudzuzar, the Grand Magnate had slowly moved civilians out of the settlements and north to the goblin cities of Agzhabar and Juhudzuzar in the White Mountains. He had also stationed his most powerful warriors, pious priests, and learned masters of the Way in Zhavahr - which was now a formidable fortress. Adding to the bastion's defenses were scores of constructs - golems and other types of fearsome automata.

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As the Grand Magnate and the last group of defenders arrived in Zhavahr from the evacuated capital, the priests and masters of the Way enacted the Terminus Contingency. A long prepared plan, this contingency was a last resort as well as a form of scorched earth warfare. Using their powers, and a psionic artifact known as the *Gatecrasher*, the goblins produced a supremely powerful psionic effect.

At the moment the ritual was completed, the Terminus Contingency sealed the area around the fortress against all planar intrusion. The fuel for this interdiction was the lifeforce of everything in a mile-wide radius around the fortress: plants turned to dust; trees collapsed into lifeless splinters; fungi and bacteria in the soil were instantly eradicated. Not only did the defenders of Zhavahr deny Daskinor's defilers the ability to power their spells, the dimensional interdiction also prevented all teleportation and planar travel within the 1-mile radius of the *Gatecrasher*.

When Daskinor's army arrived at Zhavahr a month later, it came to a screeching halt at the walls of the redoubt. Not only were the defilers unable to lend their power to the siege, but the devastation around Zhavahr also denied the army any forage or firewood. After three months of grinding siege warfare, the Champion's forces only managed to breach the outer two sets of walls. The third held firm, as did the spire itself. The elemental priests among the defenders hurled magma and rock at the attackers, their elemental magicks unaffected by the dead zone.

Eventually, one of Daskinor's defiler warlords came up with a workaround. The corps of defilers had already precisely measured the range of the dead zone. By modifying some of the army's *defiling engines*, they could plant them in the land beyond the dead zone, defile the areas around them, and then carry the stored energy back to the front lines. Daskinor immediately set his minions to work. The process of empowering the mass of *engines* finished off life in the foothills surrounding Zhavahr, creating what is now known as the Bald Buttes area. With the stored life energy in the modified *defiling engines*, Daskinor and his defilers could finally enter the fray.

The third and final wall fell a mere hour after sorcery was employed against it. The attacking troops swarmed over the defenders, cutting many of them off before they could retreat to the spire. The spire itself

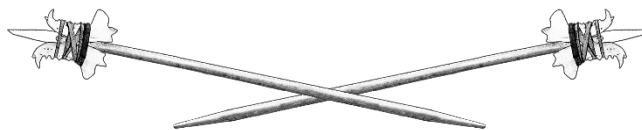
had been fortified with magic and psionics over many years, but even so, it couldn't stand against the full fury of a Champion. The gates fell before the day was out, and the slaughter of the defenders began.

Many of the goblin defenders triggered prepared tunnel collapses and booby traps. The golems, psion-killers, and other constructs brought down entire vaults upon the heads of the attackers. Even as the goblins died, they sought to take as many of the enemy into death as possible. The Grand Magnate and his inner circle met their fates stoically in the central atrium of the fortress. Surrounded by hundreds of dead humans, the last goblin in Zhavahr breathed no more. The death toll on the goblin side was absolute. Not a single defender survived to be taken prisoner and tortured for information. The losses to Daskinor's army were truly terrible - he had lost thousands of experienced troops over the months of the siege, and thousands more as the interior of the spire turned into a killing maze.

Victorious, but bloodied, Daskinor withdrew his forces from Zhavahr. No attempt was made to retrieve bodies or loot the fortress. After his army had rested and been reinforced, Daskinor marched his forces north-east to his next target: the goblin cities of the White Mountains.

Daskinor never learned of the presence of the *Gatecrasher* deep within the catacombs of Zhavahr, and it remains there into the present age. The dimensional sealing effect meant that none of the dead, whether goblin or human, ever arose into undeath. Although many of the constructs within Zhavahr were destroyed during the fall of the spire, many more were entombed beneath rubble. Over time, most of these dug their way out and began clearing the passages and chambers so that they could resume their assigned patrols.

The treasures, heirlooms, and archives of Great Zhahudzuzar were never found by Daskinor's forces. Even if the archives and treasures were hidden elsewhere, certainly the Grand Magnate and his inner circle would have brought their personal effects and combat gear with them to Zhavahr. Perhaps the knowledge of where the realm's wealth is hidden lies entombed with the Grand Magnate in the center of the spire, but any who would seek it out would first have to deal with hundreds of constructs without the aid of arcane magic.



*Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains VI.1*



# Chapter Eight: Flora and Fauna

*"You see? Plants do conquer the silt. Plants do fight back. Only very slowly..."*

- Ahlsi, tari herbalist

The Trembling Plains are one of the largest and richest regions of scrubland on Athas. Due to the region's unique weather patterns, as well as the large number of varied terrain types that border it, the Trembling Plains are home to several unique types of plants and animals.

## Flora

### Vines

#### Bembas

This vine has very dark, bluish-green leaves about 10 by 15 inches across and sports attractive white flowers which fruit into luscious yellowish half-globes. The rind of this fruit has a very pleasant odor, but the fruit itself is mildly poisonous, though it can be rendered edible through fermentation or being soaking in milk. Kurnans cultivate the plant mainly to provide an outer layer of shade for their clave-tarps. Kurnans also wrap meats in the bembas leaves, which are edible when steamed, and have a pleasant mild flavor.

#### Skyvine

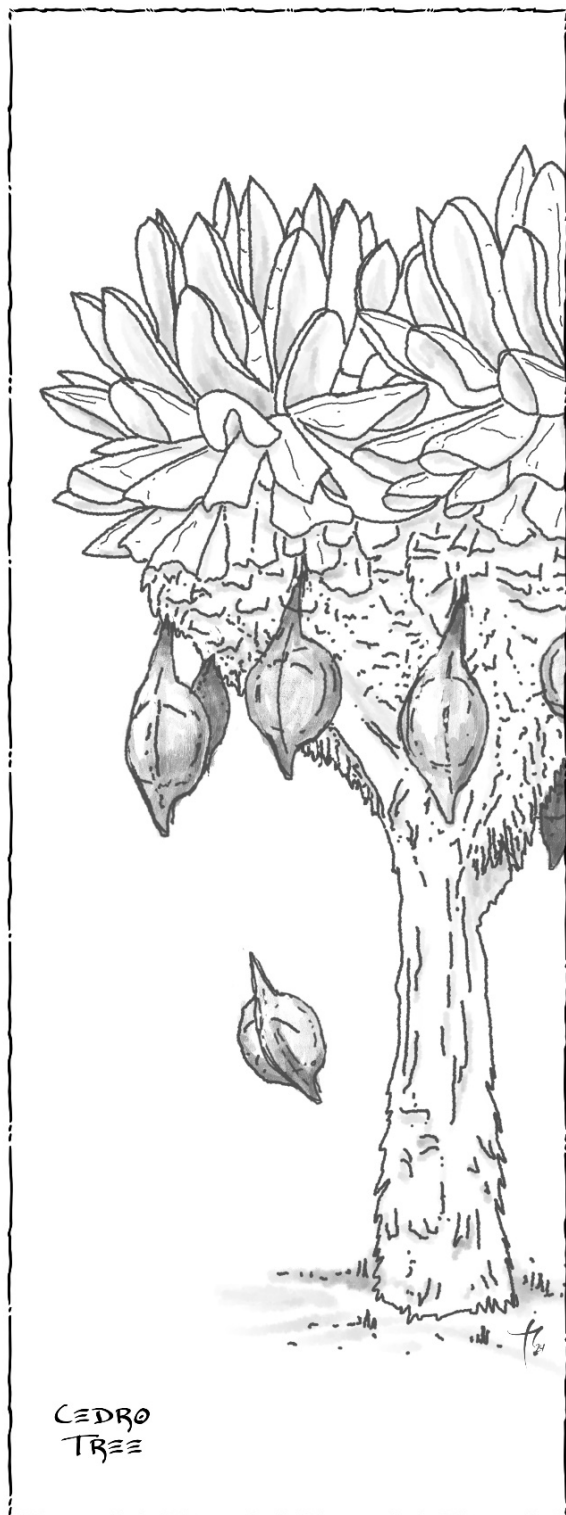
Where water sources lie deep beneath the Sea of Silt, and where supports (such as bridge pillars) are not available, one Athasian vine has developed an innovative way of reaching the sunlight. The skyvine puffs some of its nodules with a lighter than air gas (hydrogen), causing the vines to float to the surface. Even when a strand of skyvine reaches the surface of the silt, it continues to climb upwards. If water sources begin to run low, some of the plant's sections will dry out and break loose, soaring into the air and scattering the plant's seed across the Sea of Silt. Floaters seem to find these plants fascinating, and giant wasps cannot get enough of their nectar when the skyvines bloom.

Silt crews find that keeping a few nets of skyvine bubbles increases the amount of weight that a ship can carry without sinking. Eldaarish heartbeat drummers sometimes use skyvine bubbles in conjunction with



## Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains VI.1

nets and ropes to hold them in a fixed position in the air. It is possible that someone might hold on to one that was large enough, and soar into the air (see FFN for more details).



### Knotvine

This curious vine tends to grow around tree trunks, locking itself in knots around multiple young limbs and forcing the various branches together. Sometimes the knotvine forces together several different trees, interlocking the branches and roots until they take on the appearance of a single, enormously wide tree. Kurnan humans have yet to find any use for this plant, and consider it a noxious weed that causes trees to grow in ways that make their fruits hard to reach. On the other hand, the Kurnan baazrags of the Teamsters' Clave deliberately cultivate the knotvine around their fruit trees, to keep lesser climbers away from their precious fruit.

### Silt's Fury

The seeds of these rapid-growing vines may lie dormant at the bottom of the Sea of Silt for King's Ages. There are actually multiple unrelated species of these plants, but they are all grouped together because of their single unifying behavior: they tear down structures that have foundations within the Sea of Silt. Like any vine, the plants are just trying to pull themselves up into a position to take in sunlight, but these vines tend to dig in too deeply, and can tear solid stone structures to pieces in a matter of years if care is not taken to scrape them off. Several species of silt's fury have edible seeds and flowers, and some denizens of the coastal regions have actually taken to cultivating them by planting rods or pillars near a moisture source under the silt.

### Trees

Trees over 1,200 years old growing within the Trembling Plains, White Mountains, and Rohorind forest, have sometimes been said to have spontaneously taken on qualities of a *tree of life*. Most sages ridicule the idea, saying that the fact that no one knows who created the *trees of life* does not mean that they occur naturally. Whether this rumor is true or not, it gives Kurnans, halflings, and the Eloy reason to protect ancient trees wherever they may be.

### Cedro Tree

A tall hardwood common in the Rohorind, and rare in the Banding Slopes area. When harvested, this tree yields high quality lumber, less valuable than agafari, but with nearly the same value per pound as teak.

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### **Fleearna Tree**

A tree topped by massive leaf rosettes, the woody stem of the fleearna normally grows straight and tall, only splitting into two to four branches at its top. Each year, the dead and withered rosettes that grow on top of the branches harden, helping to insulate the plant from the elements. The fleearna tree grows large, 3-foot-long seed pods which slowly fill with buoyant gas. Once mature, the pod releases from the branch and floats away from the base of the tree in an effort to propagate farther. The halfling tribes collect pods just before they reach maturity and make use of them to provide a flying platform on which a warrior can ride, at least until the gasses dissipate and the pod settles to the ground. Halfling children throughout the Rohorind forest learn to fly these at an early age (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Frosty Saedra**

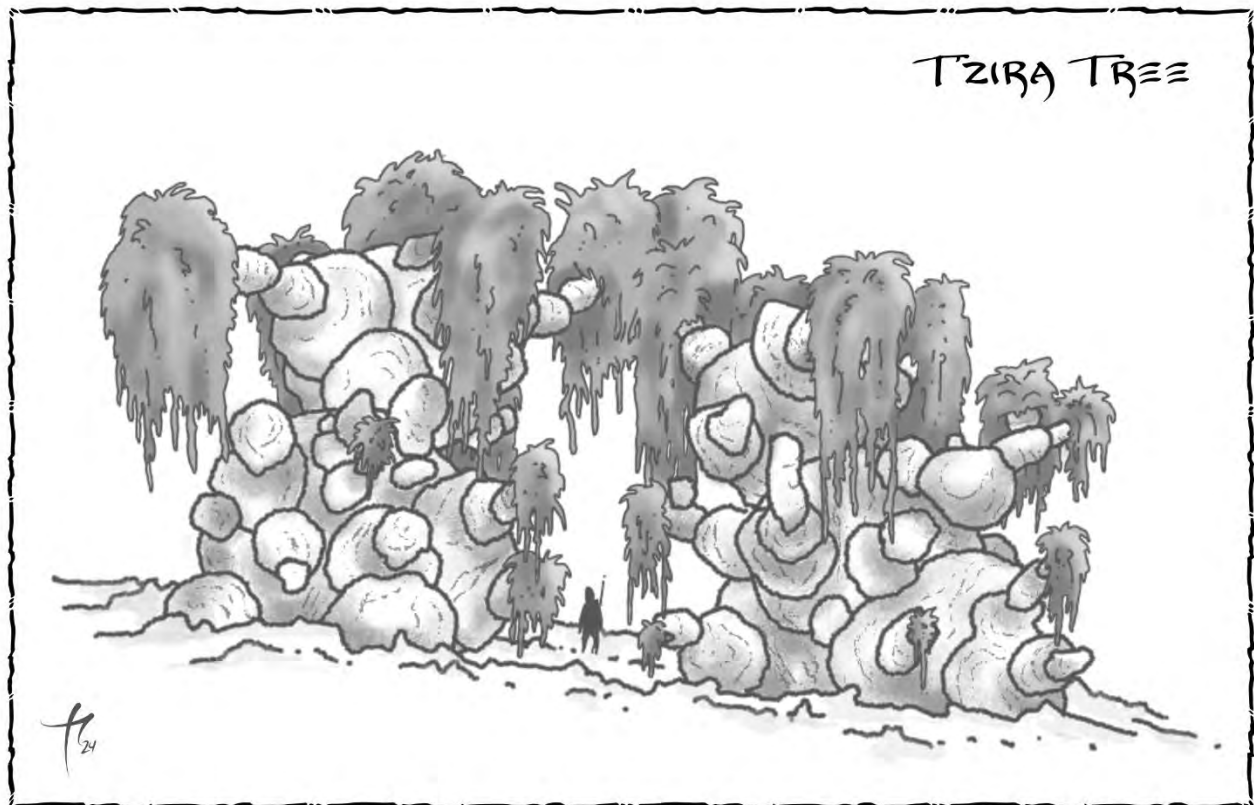
This type of saedra tree grows only in cold climes, such as in the Snow Crowns. It constantly sheds and regrows parts of its bark; the parts that are about to shed turn a frosty white, exposing the blueish-green hued wood beneath.

### **Mo'onis Tree**

This tree, common around streams and oases, produces heavy, fleshy flowers with a subtle but pleasant scent. They range in size from that of an open human hand to the size of a half-giant's hand. The plant's inedible but decorative fruit turns any of a variety of bright colors.

### **Sky-Cotton Tree**

This softwood tree thrives in wet valleys, and can grow up to 200 feet tall, becoming a menace to everything nearby as its branches often cannot support their own weight and come crashing to the ground. The tree gets its name from the fluffy white material that falls from its branches during Fruitbirth season. If the sky-cotton can be caught before it reaches the ground, and kept dry, then it remains fluffy and can be used for making inexpensive cloth similar to hemp; the Cotnier's Clave mounts large nets around Kurn and the Banding Slopes for this purpose. Sky-cotton that touches the ground becomes nothing but a nuisance and fire hazard. At the beginning of Flamesky, Kurnans remove their ceiling tarps and anything else flammable, and set the ground on fire in a controlled burn to safely remove the hazard.



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### **T'zira tree**

Common in the Rohorind and coveted as a decorative tree in the Banding Slopes, the most distinctive feature of the t'zira tree is its thick trunk seemingly composed completely of burls, which makes it a favorite of young halflings learning to climb and shoot from hiding. The burls continue growing throughout a tree's life, giving t'ziras the appearance of a pile of rounded outgrowths. The t'zira's foliage is made of a group of leaves growing at the ends of its short, rounded branches. Nearly devoid of branches, the wood of the t'zira is highly sought by the woodworkers of Kurn's Artisans Clave, where its twisted grain and interlocked swirls and knots are used to create unique pieces of furniture, household objects, and musical instruments.

## **Herbs and Ground Plants**

### **Bamboo**

This fast-growing woody grass grows wild from the silt all along the Storm Coast, and is often harvested by slaves at South Guard. Bamboo grows prolifically in the Storm Coast, but never reaches more than 40 feet in height because of the yearly lightning storms that are drawn to and obliterate anything standing over 15 feet high.

The Eldaarish use the bamboo's inexpensive and low-quality wood for a variety of purposes, ranging from fragile structures to containers for smoking charot root. When reinforced with resin, bamboo can sometimes passably replace lumber. The squid-head giants that live north of South Guard create sanctuaries and pavilions in what they call "holy groves" of bamboo.

### **Brambleweed**

This plant is a thick, thorny, brown-gray vine that grows wild but is also sometimes cultivated by various peoples as a defensive boundary. Brambleweed is usually found as a thick, twisted mass, but it can also be shaped into tree-like stems. Skilled horticulturists can harvest lengths of the stems for use as thorned clubs or staves (see *Terrors of Athas* for more details).

### **Carnivorous Tumbleweed**

At a distance, these dangerous plants often appear to be nothing more than abnormally large but otherwise ordinary tumbleweeds. Ordinary that is, until an observer realizes that the tumbleweed is moving

perpendicular to the wind. Despite its name, carnivorous tumbleweeds don't actually consume animal life; rather, they seek to envelop a victim and implant seeds within them (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Murza Bush**

Common along streams in the White Mountains (including their foothills) and the Oronha Valley, this sturdy evergreen bush bears tiny white flowers around the end of Flamesky season, and clear and white berries that mature to edibility around Ral's Rest. It sometimes appears in oases as far south as Conak's Rock and has been domesticated in the secure gardens of Azeth's Rest.

### **Charot**

This low-lying bush only grows in the Storm Coast, where taller bushes that block the sunlight tend to be obliterated by lightning during Windflood season. The shavings off the bark of the roots have stimulant-like properties. Some herders and Eldaarish inhale charot smoke to stay awake during long nights while keeping watch; it is a very addictive habit.

### **Chufa**

Also known as "tigone nut" for the tuber's banding, this plant is remarkably hardy and can hibernate in drought conditions for several years before sprouting again. Though most prolific throughout the Snow Crowns and Rohorind forest due to its water-loving nature, this tuber is grown across the region for its many uses and ease of storage. Each plant can bear hundreds, even thousands of quarter to 1-inch-long tubers, which can be cooked, dried, or pressed into oil.

### **Duchesnea**

A very short leafy plant, duchesnea spreads through the soil and periodically shoots up stalks that bear bright red berries. These bumpy round berries are known for their medicinal uses and are held sacred by both Sun priests and the Eloy, who know them as "Sun Berries." The berries and leaves are both edible and relatively flavorless, and can assist healing of flesh wounds and combat infections when prepared as a poultice, while an infusion of the flowers is said to promote blood-flow. The Eloy can be found to carry these berries at almost all times, as they will stay fresh for nearly a year, so long as the berries remain unbruised.

### **Naglassi**

This flowering plant grows naturally only in that portion of the Trembling Plains west of the Blood Prairie. During Coldnights and Ral's Rest seasons, the plant's berries appear. These are edible to aarakokra, but induce nausea in other humanoid creatures, and are toxic to kanks (who eat the berries and do not show signs of sickness until 1-4 days later). Kanks are also allergic to the pollen that the plant produces during the Fruitbirth season, which causes them to become confused and highly agitated.

### **Ranth**

This dusty-looking grass produces brightly colored seeds that hang like dates. The seeds can be made into flour or cooked as a vegetable. Ranth does especially well in hot and dry climates.

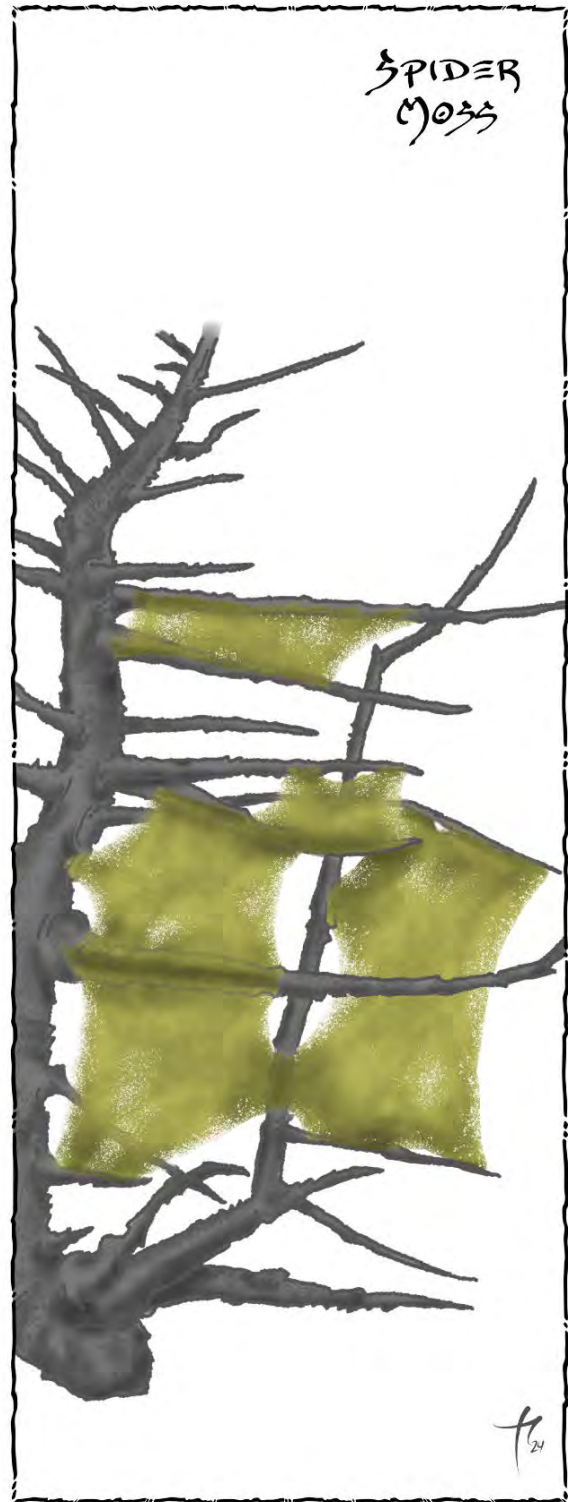
### **Spider Moss**

Growing between branches of trees or over pits in the ground, spider moss is so named because the plant behaves like a spider, slowly spinning a 'web' between points: a few days after the first strands are laid across a pit, mossy cover begins to creep in, and, within a few weeks, the spider moss looks like solid ground; after a few months, the bottom layer of the moss actually becomes solid enough to walk on, and eventually feels as solid as hard earth or wood, although there is always a soft, springy layer of moss on top. Even the solid part of the moss is still alive, however, and if caught in a defiler's radius, it turns to dust, often causing anything standing on top of the moss to tumble into the pit beneath.

Because of these qualities, spider moss is being used as part of the Brambleburn Wall, an unfinished barrier that will eventually surround and protect the Kurnlands.

### **Trembling Spinifex**

This spiny, wiry grass is ubiquitous in the Trembling Plains and shares its name. It is very tough, growing in tightly-packed circles that creep ever wider. Over time, these circles build up into domes that make ready homes for small game, and as such certain Eloy tribes hold the grass to be sacred. The grass shoots up tough bristly stalks several times a year which bear spiny, somewhat odorous purple flowers. When disturbed, the mature flower will tremble and spit seeds as high and wide as possible. Well adapted for the



thunderstorms that roll in from the coast, this 'spitting grass' is resistant to fire, silt tolerant, capable of multiple fruitings per year, and can regrow from almost nothing. As such it is considered a nuisance by nobles across the Banding Slopes.



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### **Thorny Aska**

This thorned woody bush grows around oases and water holes. It is also known as “Gith Ribs,” for the thin thorn-covered cage that surrounds a cluster of scentless gray flowers at the plant’s heart. Despite its twisted, knobby appearance, this plant is surprisingly rigid and unyielding. It often grows invasively in wells, and the thorns raise itchy welts where they draw blood. The tubular fruit of this plant averages 3 inches long and is narrow with an ashen white waxy exterior and hot spicy flavor. The fruit is often dried and ground, or stuffed and roasted.

## **Fauna**

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Aside from forested areas, the Trembling Plains offer one of the richest hunting grounds in the world. Well-watered and sparsely populated, many animal species find food, water, and refuge among the variety of habitats on or near the Plains. The general lack of civilization in the region aids this ecological balance - few hunters from the Tablelands roam here looking to capture beasts for a sorcerer-monarch’s arena. Those who dwell on the Trembling Plains are aware of and appreciate their isolation from the cities of the Tablelands.

### **Bat, Reptilian**

These foot-long flying reptiles bear a close resemblance to the much larger pterrax. Found in many areas of the Trembling Plains, these bats only ever come out after dark, and then only in swarms of dozens or hundred of individuals. Individually, these tiny creatures are no threat to anything other than small insects. As they swarm together, however, they gain potent psychic powers that aid them in hunting prey and protecting themselves (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Brine Worm (flat)**

These thin, pale worms come in a range of colors, from sallow yellow to bone white. Native to the Rohorind Forest and the surrounding region, the worms pose a hazard to all animal life in the area. Adult worms can enter an animal through any orifice or, if necessary, burrow directly through flesh. Once within a victim, they feed for several weeks, slowly causing increasing illness before sprouting close to their entry point and releasing eggs into the environment - preferably into a water source. The eggs can remain dormant for many

months, only hatching into fresh worms when sufficiently wet.

These creatures are known as “brine” worms because that is the only known way to remove them - soaking a fresh entry or egg-laying wound or orifice in especially salty water causes the worm to exit the body and enter the brine. Brine worms are typically not lethal on their own, but they are nonetheless likely to weaken a host and indirectly cause its death.

### **Brine Worm (tube)**

These tiny, leech-like worms burrow into the banks of the many springs and streams of the Rohorind, thriving within the water. The worms latch onto a victim using a psionically-numbed bite, and begin chewing their way through the victim, seeking out the heart, typically only releasing their prey in death - either theirs or the victim’s. Much like their flatworm cousins, however, immersion in extremely salty water causes a worm to drop off into the water (treat as a rot-grub, except that it can swim).

### **Cilops, Rock**

Rock cilops are similar to the cilops of the Tablelands, except that they cannot track and can move through gravel or sand (Burrow 10 ft). They are native to the foothills of the White Mountains, and to tunnels beneath those mountains, but rock cilops cannot abide cold weather or ice.

### **Cistern Fiend**

More commonly found in the wells and cisterns of the Trembling Plains than those of the Tablelands, the younglings of these creatures are actually bred and sold by the Kurnan Welldiggers Clave.

### **Feylaar, Ice**

Native to the White Mountains, ice feylaars share the same physical and mental characteristics as their rainforest dwelling cousins, with the exception of their pelts. Ice feylaars have stark white fur that is far thicker than that of other feylaar, suitable for protecting them from the frigid temperatures of their home mountains. Scholars in Kurn believe that there may be as many as a dozen extended clans of ice feylaars throughout the White Mountains, though a thorough cataloging of the elusive creatures has yet to be done. Students of the Way sometimes seek out the ice feylaars as tutors, as

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they are believed to have specialized knowledge of psionics they may be willing to teach others.

### **Glutu**

These tiny, furry worms dwell in the snow and ice packs of the upper White Mountains. They subsist primarily on algae that grows in the watery environment as well as on psionic energies. Occasionally (roughly once every King's Age or so) some sort of psionic burst causes one of these tiny worms to grow to immense size over the course of several months. The transformation into a great frost worm afflicts the creature with a terrible hunger, and they prey upon anything that crosses their path. At least one worm was recently awoken by The Order and their use of the Psionatrix.

### **Harnaq**

Harnaqs are egg-laying mammals whose milk is very prized in Kurn. Harnaq females are known as cows, and are as large as an inix, while harnaq males are much smaller - about the size of a halfling - and known as terriers. All harnaqs are protected by poisonous, needle-like quills. The females are huge, slow, and generally nonaggressive, but the males are quick, dexterous, and extremely aggressive when moving to protect their mates. Wild harnaqs live in the Rohorind Forest, where they are seasonal creatures: when the dry season arrives, the harnaq cows abandon their mates to burrow into the wettest ground that they can find and hibernate until the rains return. When properly fed and watered, domesticated harnaq do not need to hibernate (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Kir'ren**

Distantly related to kirre, though smaller in size, kir'rens are large felines with membranous flaps of skin between their limbs, allowing them to glide from branch to branch, traversing the forest with great speed and dropping upon their prey from above. The kir'ren are spotted rather than striped like their cousins, and their coloration ranges from light to dark green or browns with black spots. The flaps of skin between each limb are covered in the same color fur as the rest of the cat. Kir'ren commonly dwell in those areas of the Rohorind Forest and the White Mountains that are furthest from hunters and other areas of civilization (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Renkface Frog**

These tiny green frogs are herbivorous amphibians that can be found in the Rohorind Forest, and their mottled-brown faces aid in camouflaging them in the moist mud found there. Renkface frogs have found a special ecological niche for themselves by adapting to eating plants that are otherwise toxic to animals, causing them to secrete a paralyzing toxin from their skin. This toxin (and hence the frogs) are eagerly sought out by the halfling tribes of the Rohorind, who use the frogs' toxin to coat their weapons.

### **Rohorind Raptor**

These small, dull-colored birds prefer to inhabit warm forests. Most Rohorind raptors are nocturnal, actively hunting for prey only under cover of darkness. The raptors mostly hunt small mammals, insects, and other smaller birds, and their strategy depends mostly on stealth and surprise. Rohorind raptors were once much more common, but today the only place where they are known to still exist is the Rohorind Forest (see *FFN* for more details).

### **Silt Scallop**

Native to the Storm Coast, this prolific silt-dwelling bivalve has spread up the old river beds of the Forgotten North. The banded pink shell of this creature is ridged and heavy, with sharp spines ending in venomous barbs, making it perfect for manufacturing armor. Though size varies widely and specimens up to 5 feet across have been recorded, the scallops' shells are 1 to 2 feet across on average. Silt scallops both filter feed and actively hunt. To filter feed, the scallops blindly swim through the silt, consuming whatever nutrients happen to be drawn into themselves along with the silt. When hunting, they wait in ambush in the shallows and riverbeds, waiting to consume small invertebrates moving through the dust. The largest specimens are said to carry silt-pearls in addition to their sweet, succulent meat; the Eldaarish are rumored to raise beds of scallops along the coast as a local delicacy.

### **Spider, Hermit**

This species of halfling-sized spider is black and mottled by red spots. Indigenous to the Charvass Peninsula, their joints are particularly sturdy, giving the spiders a bite force similar to that of a soldier kank. While the spiders' venom is not always lethal, it is well known to cause terrible pain. The hermit spider's

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carapace, despite being highly heat resistant and fibrous, is quite flexible and soft; as an adaptation, the spiders employ plates of lava rock as protective shells, which they bind to themselves using their sticky silk.

### **Striped Tubeworm**

These carnivorous worms can be found in mudflats and oases all along the Sea of Silt, but they are most common in the Forgotten North - particularly along the Storm Coast. Striped tubeworms burrow down into the mud, lashing out of their underground tubes to bite at prey. These worms are rarely more than two inches across, but can grow up to a dozen feet in length, and their flexible bodies stretch half again that far when they strike with their sharp teeth and poisonous bristles.

Striped tubeworms tend to grow in colonies, and are sometimes known as "motte worms" due to the tube-infested mounds such colonies create. Solitary worms tend to grow to great size, grabbing or ambushing prey from quite a distance. The smaller worms are just as poisonous as the larger ones, and together a colony can bring down prey as large as an inix. The worms reproduce via eggs released around a worm's mouth, and can spread either by drying up and blowing on the wind, or by being transferred onto prey animals that

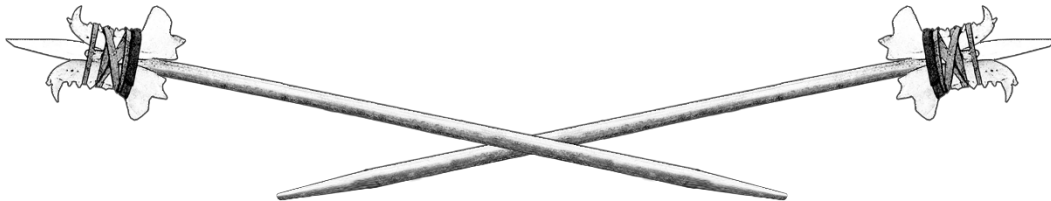
escape the worms. Once the animal enters another mudflat or oasis, the eggs will hatch and begin a new colony of worms.

### **Tigone, Snow**

As rare as the snowy lands they inhabit, these black and white striped great cats are found most often in the Snow Crowns, below the peaks inhabited by the Silvaarak. Snow tiones are larger than their more common cousins, but are even less tolerant of hot environments. Given the rarity of ice and snow on Athas, these tiones may be the last of their kind.

### **Wasp, domesticated**

These green and yellow striped wasps are 2 to 3 feet long and are found mostly in and around the city of Kurn. The Kurnan Wasp Herder Clave has domesticated these insects to produce cheap, easily harvested paper, and have also introduced nests of the wasps to the Brambleburn Wall currently being grown around the Bandling Slopes. When the wasps gnaw on the brambleweed thickets, the paper they create is resistant to fire and extreme heat. The Clave has begun selling this paper for a premium.



# Chapter Nine: Player Handouts

*"Welcome to Tanner's Grove, pure collectors! Please take your bags of excrement over to the tannery guild on your right."*

- Vholjis, Fort Stench customs agent

This section contains spoiler-free details which DMs can slowly give out to players who are adventuring in the Trembling Plains or simply hand as reference material to those creating a character from the region.

## General Information on the Trembling Plains

### Things Every Local Knows

**The Trembling Plains:** The Trembling Plains get their name from the mekillot stampedes that often shake the ground.

**The Eloy:** Most of the inhabitants of the Trembling Plains are nomadic herders. Many of these herders belong to the Eloy, a particularly large racial group of humans with partially elven heritage, who are divided into tribes of various sizes.

**Elves / Elf Tribes:** Several elven tribes - including the Mirage Makers, the Moon Racers, the Swift Wings, and the Sons of the Free - spend much of their time in the Trembling Plains, either dwelling in the Plains for much of the year, or often traveling through the region in their travels.

**Seasons:** The Trembling Plains experience five seasons throughout the year: Flamesky, Ral's Rest, Coldnights, Windflood, and Fruitbirth. Flamesky has the hottest and longest days of the year, and sees an invasion of the "kreen" each year. Ral's Rest sees cold winds blow in the mornings, making the mornings as cold as the nights. During Coldnights, the nights grow bitterly cold, though the days remain hot. In Windflood, dark purplish clouds roll in from the west, carrying rain that often turns into heavy downpours. In Fruitbirth, the rains and temperate days of Windflood give way to hot dry days; flowers bloom and fruit begins to grow.

**The "Kreen" (Trin):** Each year, hordes of mantoids invade the Trembling Plains during the season of Flamesky. These "kreen" relentlessly hunt any game they can find, not caring if their prey are beasts or

people. Most inhabitants of the Plains withdraw to one of a few fortified settlements or leave the Trembling Plains for the season to avoid the rampaging "kreen." Few residents of the Trembling Plains know or care about the difference between the trin invaders and the more intelligent thri-kreen.

**Forgotten North:** Those who live in the region know it as the Trembling Plains. Only Drylanders call it the "Forgotten North."

**Drylanders:** The inhabitants of the Trembling Plains refer to people from the Tablelands as Drylanders, due to the dryness of the Tablelands when compared to the scrublands of the Trembling Plains.

**Dim Lands / Dimlanders:** Several islands in the Sea of Silt lie near the coast of the Trembling Plains, and are referred to as the Dim Lands, due to the silt that constantly hangs in the air there and often blots out the sun. The inhabitants of the Dim Lands are known as Dimlanders.

**Eldaarich/ Eldaarish:** Ruled by the sorcerer-king Daskinor, the city-state of Eldaarich lies on the largest island in the Dim Lands and controls all of the Dim Lands. The inhabitants of Eldaarich are known as the Eldaarish.

**Daskinor:** The paranoid and capricious sorcerer-king Daskinor rules the city-state of Eldaarich. His insanity makes the city a prison both for him and his subjects.

**Red Guards:** The Red Guards are Eldaarish templars who range far from their city-state, slaughtering invaders and capturing slaves to drag back to the Dim Lands.

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**Hogalay:** Carved into a mesa that stands roughly in the center of the Trembling Plains and ruined for thousands of years, Hogalay was the greatest dwarven city in the region. Well-known to be a haunted and cursed place, Hogalay was until very recently the source of many small earthquakes.

**White Mountains:** Serving as the northwestern boundary of the Trembling Plains, the White Mountains are made up of two separate ranges: the mountains of Rifak's Wall that run east/west, and the Snow Crown Mountains which run roughly northeast to southwest.

**Kurn:** Ruled by the sorcerer-king Oronis, the city-state of Kurn lies just north of the Trembling Plains, nestled up against the foothills of Rifak's Wall. The surrounding land controlled by the city-state are

known as the Kurnlands, and the inhabitants of Kurn are known as Kurnans.

**Oronis:** Sorcerer-king of the city-state of Kurn. While said to be a dictator like the rulers of the other city-states, Oronis' laws seem to be stern but strangely fair.

**House Azeth:** House Azeth is a Kurnan merchant house that largely dominates trade in the Trembling Plains. Azeth maintains the fortified oasis of Azeth's Rest, and is well-regarded in the region, as it shares many familial ties with the region's Eloy herders.

**Bandit States:** Located to the west of the Trembling Plains, the Bandit States are home to a number of villages full of brutal raiders, who often range into the Plains looking to carry away booty and slaves.

## Traveler's Guide to Azeth's Rest

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### Approaching the Fortress

As you approach the fortress, there is a gallows on the right side of the path just 25 feet from the walls - an obvious warning.

### The Fortress Gates

During the hottest times of the year, and during the first week of every new moon, the gates of Azeth's Rest are shut and you cannot enter without a special token. At other times, the gates are open from sunrise to sunset, but you are not allowed to remain in Azeth's Rest beyond sunset, unless you have a special token.

### Where to Stay

The Drik's Belly Inn is the only business where a traveler may pay to sleep under a roof, but not all of its rented rooms are actually in the Drik's Belly. Since the inn is often full, the Drik's Belly has purchased several nearby buildings.

### Where to Board Your Mount

Azeth's Rest only has one stable for kanks, nothing for inixes, and stone pillars where mekillots can be safely lashed. Herders often lease empty space from House Azeth to set up animal pens, and you can probably find a herder who will take your coin to board your inixes or kanks. Failing that, you can find herders who will agree to keep your beasts for you outside Azeth's walls. Many of the more expensive boarding options available through the Drik's Belly are built to room kanks as well as people, with wide doors so that the kank can come right through the door.

### Where to Find Food

The only tavern in Azeth's Rest open year-round is the Drik's Belly, and prices are fairly high. During the busier seasons, you can find cheaper and perhaps

## *Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains VI.1*

tastier dining among the tents and stalls along the road, although their cleanliness may be questionable. The Five Seasons Inn - open only for the season of Flamesky - offers no food, but instead serves a wide variety of alcoholic beverages.

### **Where to Shop**

There is an armorer's, a cobbler's, a potter's, a leather goods shop, and a tack and harness shop, but most of the small quantity goods in Azeth's Rest are sold from movable tents and stalls, and it's always easier to find goods during one of the seasonal trade fairs. There are fewest of these stalls during the Fruitbirth or Ral's Rest seasons, but there are always a few stalls in the Drik's Market, next to the Drik's Belly Inn.

### **Where to Find Magical Components**

Ausar Maker sells magical components openly to anyone who knocks at his tower, but he is usually not at home or is otherwise occupied. His wife can usually indicate where Ausar is or when he will become available. It is unwise to hurry Ausar or interrupt him, since he is a powerful Kurnan wizard who generally gets his way around town and reputedly has a foul temper when crossed. If an elf tribe is visiting Azeth's Rest, then they will also have spell components to sell.

### **Where to Get Tattoos**

These strange northerners have few tattoos but there is at least one skilled tattoo artist in the fort, when you can find her: Ebelith of Raam, a former gladiator. Apparently Ebelith has the ability to produce a number of psionic tattoos.

### **Where to Find Poisons**

If you are within the walls of Azeth's Rest, make sure to specifically ask for "venoms," rather than poisons. Bringing ingested, contact, or inhaled poison into Azeth's Rest, or into the tent of a herder, is a serious breach of the guest's duty. Neither House Azeth nor

the herders have any objection to injury poisons (venoms), however, since if someone draws a blade on you, you can already presume that he wants to do you harm. If an elf tribe is visiting the area, then they will probably have various types of poisons to sell (outside the gates).

### **Where to Find Work**

Azeth's Rest lacks many of the opportunities that come with cities, but for a town or fortress, the opportunities here are excellent. House Azeth and the herders generally hire on either for a period of seasons (75 days each) or a period of years. However, during Azeth's four yearly trade fairs, and during Highest Sun, the area is filled with a great many people who will know about various opportunities. The Dedys Consortium has a small permanent presence in Azeth's Rest in the apartments on the inner western rim.

### **Dealing with Officials**

Deal truthfully with Azeth guards and family members: they are excellent at detecting deception.

### **Where to Get Healed**

Try the Shrine of the Desert Breeze. A surprising number of Azeth family members are Air priests—some of them very young children. The priests, even the children, know the value of their spells, and charge accordingly.

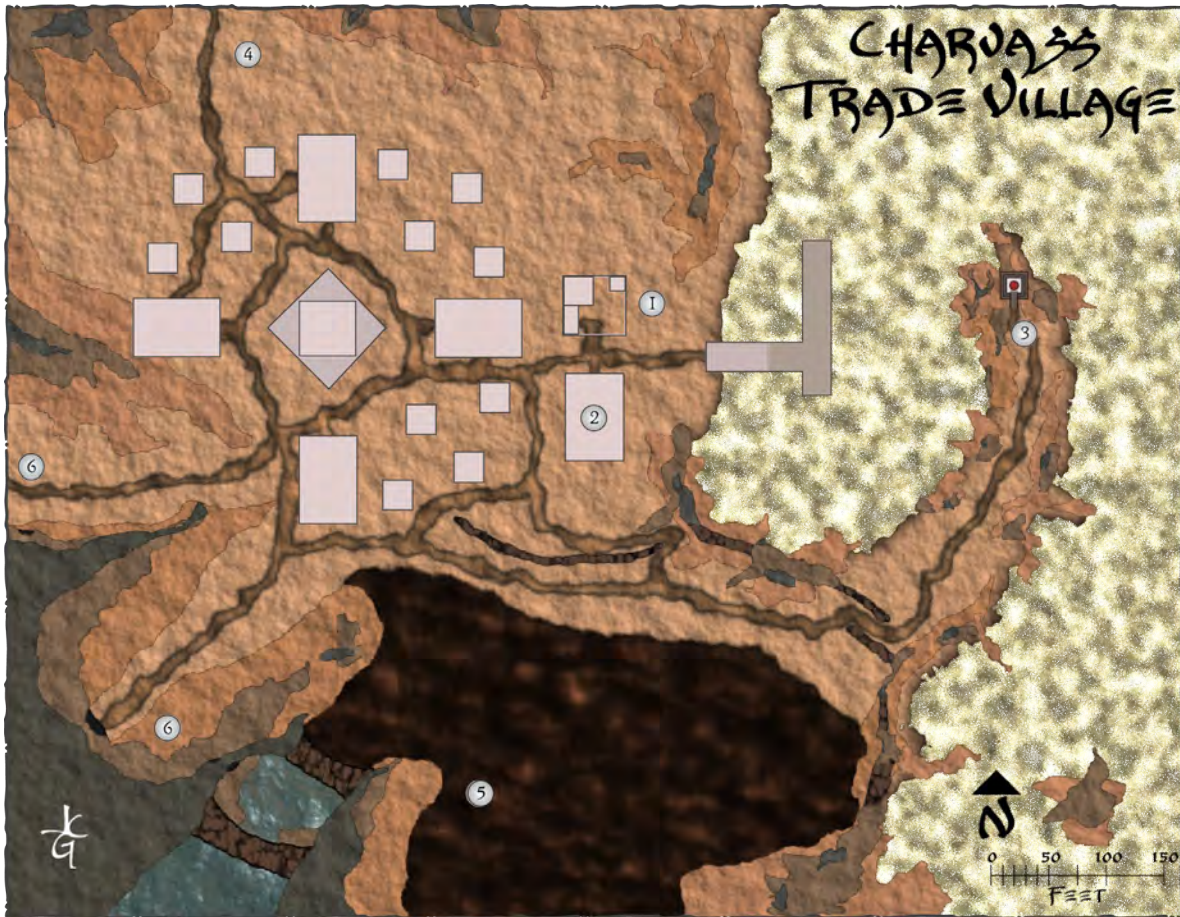
### **Local Customs**

Azeth officers have great authority with the local nomads. Azeth enforces what local elves and herders call Maat, or the Order of the Trembling Plains, which prohibits: defiling, rape, murder, enslavement by force, and banditry (attempting to kill persons in order to take their belongings). In other matters, Azeth officers refuse to become involved in quarrels that occur out of sight of Azeth's walls, unless all parties concerned ask Azeth to mediate. This happens often, so Azeth often acts as peacemakers between herder clans or elven tribes.

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## Guide to Charvass Village



### Approaching the Village

Just reaching the village of Charvass requires traversing nearly the entirety of the Charvass Peninsula, a broken landscape of badlands, stony barrens, and silt sinks. No road connects Charvass to the Trembling Plains, but a sparse footpath runs from Azeth's Rest to the village.

### The Village Itself

The village of Charvass is tiny - just a dozen small homes set among four larger stone buildings. Small farm fields surround the village, with bamboo, faro cacti, neep, and siltweed growing from the meager soil.

### Why are the Villagers Acting so Strangely?

Though outsiders may recognize them as dwarves, the residents of Charvass call themselves the Moratuc, and had

somehow not heard the word "dwarf" until a few years ago. While extremely insular, the Moratuc are extremely cheerful for dwarves and all seem to worship the element of "Ash."

### Where to Stay or Board Your Mount

Charvass rarely hosts visitors and so has no inn or stable. The Moratuc will let seemingly trustworthy visitors pitch their tents between the village's buildings, and will sometimes even allow them to stay in one of the village's storehouses or workshops for a hefty fee. Mounts are welcome to rest within the confines of the village, but whatever you do, don't let them graze on the Moratuc's meager crops if you value your life.



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### **Where to Find Food**

Charvass lacks a tavern, but a visitor can usually find a Moratuc willing to prepare them something to eat or invite them to a meal in their communal dining hall in exchange for trade goods (see below).

### **Where to Shop**

Charvass lacks true shops, but what goods the Moratuc have for sale can be found in the village's Trade House. The Trade House also serves as the office for the village's leader, who they call Uhrnius but is also known as Trenbull AlRaam'ke of House M'ke. Trenbull and his Maratuc apprentice Brodeth handle all trade deals for the village. The Moratuc usually have a supply of freshly mined obsidian and a few bone tools and weapons for trade, as well as a small supply of giant's hair from the giants of the Road of Fire.

### **Where to Find Magical Components, Tattoos, and Poisons**

The residents of Charvass rarely have need of or traffic in such specialized goods, but the village sees regular visits from House M'ke silt skimmers, and such goods might be

available from those traders; speak with Trenbull to set up such purchases.

### **Where to Find Work**

While the Moratuc will always accept help farming crops or mining obsidian, more exciting work can be found in Charvass as well. Visitors that Trenbull trusts can join a House M'ke silt skimmer crew, sign on for guard duty on an obsidian shipment to Azeths' Rest, or even attempt to put banshees to rest within the village's obsidian mines.

### **Where to Get Healed**

The village's Ash priests can be called upon, if necessary, to heal visitors - for a fee, of course.

### **Local Customs**

While strangely friendly, the Moratuc are extremely private and don't appreciate anyone poking around the village very much. Visitors who wear out their welcome or aren't there to trade will be quickly asked to leave. There is definitely more than meets the eye going on in the village of Charvass, but the residents value their privacy and aren't likely to become forthcoming any time soon.



## Guide to Conak's Rock

### Approaching the Fortress

The bastion of Conak's Rock looms a hundred feet above the road to Kurn, with the fortress walls rising another twenty feet above the cliff edge.

### The Fort's Gates

A path peels off from the road to Kurn, curving around the Rock's granite escarpment and leading to the fort's only gate, set into the north wall.

### Where to Stay, Find Food, & Board Your Mount

The Rock's only inn, the Rock's Rest, sits near the gate. The inn mostly exists to serve the needs of the fort's troops, so prices for visitors are extremely high, but Kurn is nearby - most travelers either push on to Kurn or welcome the presence of the Rock's Rest, no matter the price.

### Where to Shop

An assortment of shops, including a smithy, general store, and repair workshops are built along the interior

of the Rock's wall. Like the Rock's Rest inn, these exist largely to service the fort's garrison, so prices are similarly high.

### Where to Find Magical Components and Poisons

It's illegal to purchase magical components from anyone but the Heralds of Oronis (templars) in the Kurnlands, and the heralds stationed here in the fort don't stock extra components to sell to visitors (the components they do have are for the Rock's preserver defenders). The fort has a generous supply of venoms, and many common types can be purchased from the fort's traders, though the prices for visitors are just as high as for anything else at the Rock.

### Where to Find Work

The only work to be had at the Rock is guard duty, and the Kurnans generally only enlist soldiers in Kurn itself. Visitors who find themselves trapped in the fort during Flamesky might find themselves temporarily drafted as guards, however, depending on how dire the situation is.



## **Traveler's Guide to Fort Stench**

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### **Approaching the Fortress**

The walls of Fort Stench surround an oasis in a depression in the ground situated on the west side of the trade road. Only the pyramidal mausoleum rises above the town's high walls. There is only one set of gates. It's called Fort Stench for a reason.

### **Lovely Town, but What is that Awful Smell?**

Probably the mingled odors of burning lime and tanned furs and leathers. The Tanners', Lime-Burners', and Furriers' Claves dwell and do their smelly business here.

### **Why Don't They do Their Stinking Business Outside the Town Walls?**

Don't ask the locals questions like that. They are sensitive about their town's smell, since their businesses got kicked out of Kurn because of the smell. The locals still call this town "Tanners' Grove." Everyone else, including the governor and the militia sent here to guard the town, calls it Fort Stench.

Fort Stench sits in a dangerous area. Its walls keep out bandits and predators. The pyramidal mausoleum holds the bones from the last time that the locals were all massacred by trin or bandits or something like that. It's probably not safe to do much business outside the walls. Unfortunately, the town's high walls and the fact that the town rests in an indentation in the ground prevent the winds of the Trembling Plains from blowing away the stink. The smell is the price of security, and if you don't like it, then move along, stranger.

### **The Fort's Gates**

The gates remain shut from sunset to sunrise. Well-armed and armored Kurnan militia patrol and man fixed crossbows along the 30-foot-high walls.

### **Where to Stay, Find Food, & Board Your Mount**

The "Terrible Truth" has the best reputation among travelers, but prices are high. The "Trembling Passage" is more popular among the locals. Both inns provide stables.

### **Where to Shop**

Just across the path from the governor's palace sits a large clave tent where you will find sellers of leather goods, armor, tack for animals, and charcoal. If you're looking for custom work or buying in large quantities, ask around in the shop tent and you'll eventually get pointed towards the right specialists in town. Don't go barging into the armorer's clave by yourself though, or you may find yourself in a fistfight - a popular pastime among Kurnans.

### **Where to Find Magical Components and Poisons**

A secretary in the governor's palace sells magical components at reasonable prices, and it's illegal to purchase the components from anyone else. Ptooby, the innkeeper of the Terrible Truth is reputed to sell magical components illegally, as well as poisons. As in Azeth's Rest and among the Eloy clans, venoms are legal and unrestricted in Fort Stench. Other types of poison are restricted — best let the guards know you are carrying them, if you do want to keep the law.

### **Where to Find Work**

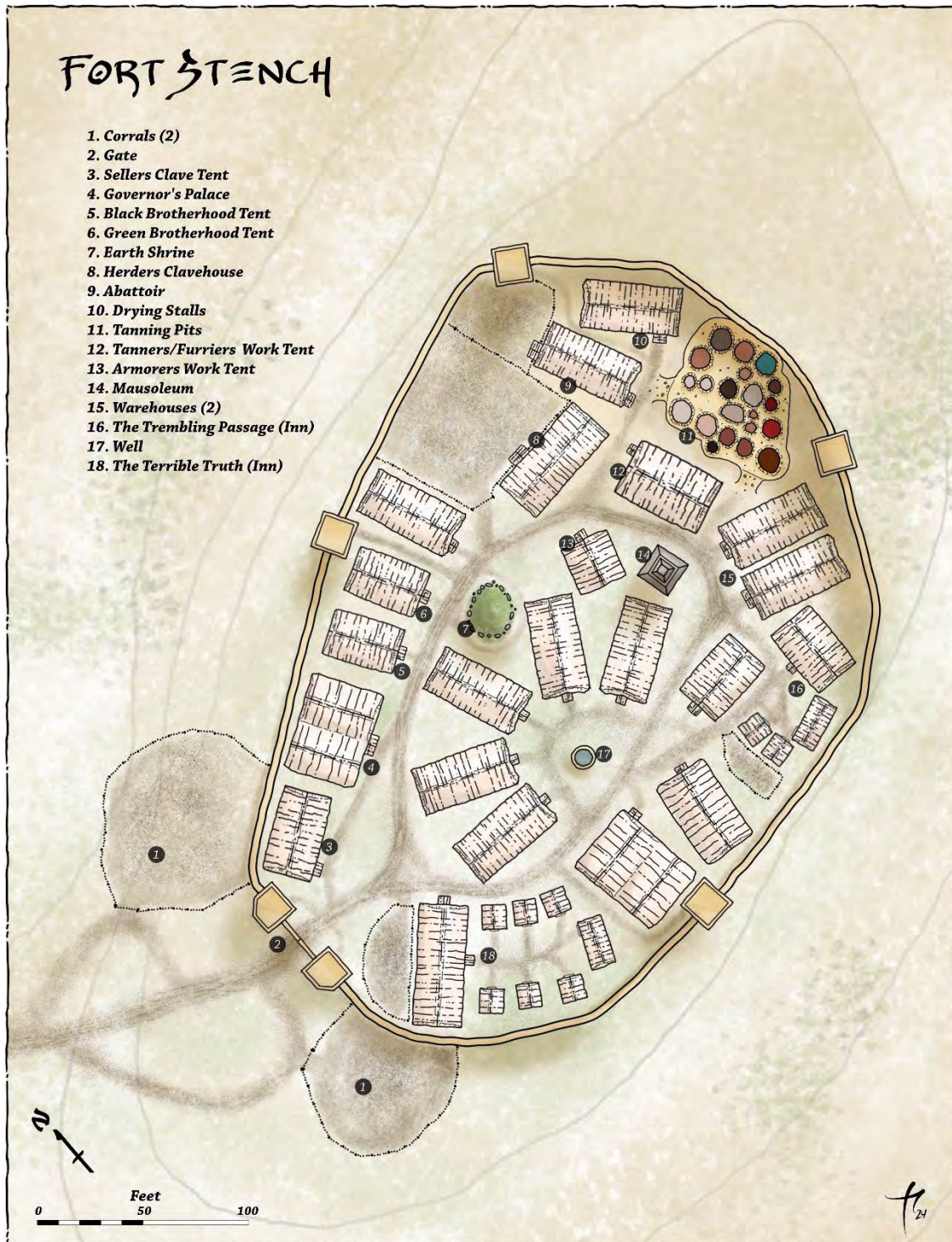
Unless you manage to persuade one of the locals to marry you, the only way to end up working in Fort Stench is as a slave, and the inhabitants are even picky about those who they accept as slaves, since they do not wish to bring a bandit or spy into their household. The inhabitants of Fort Stench (mostly those in the Tanners Clave) accept slaves for

## Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains VI.1

periods not exceeding seven years, and three-quarters of the payment is reserved until after the slave has served their term.

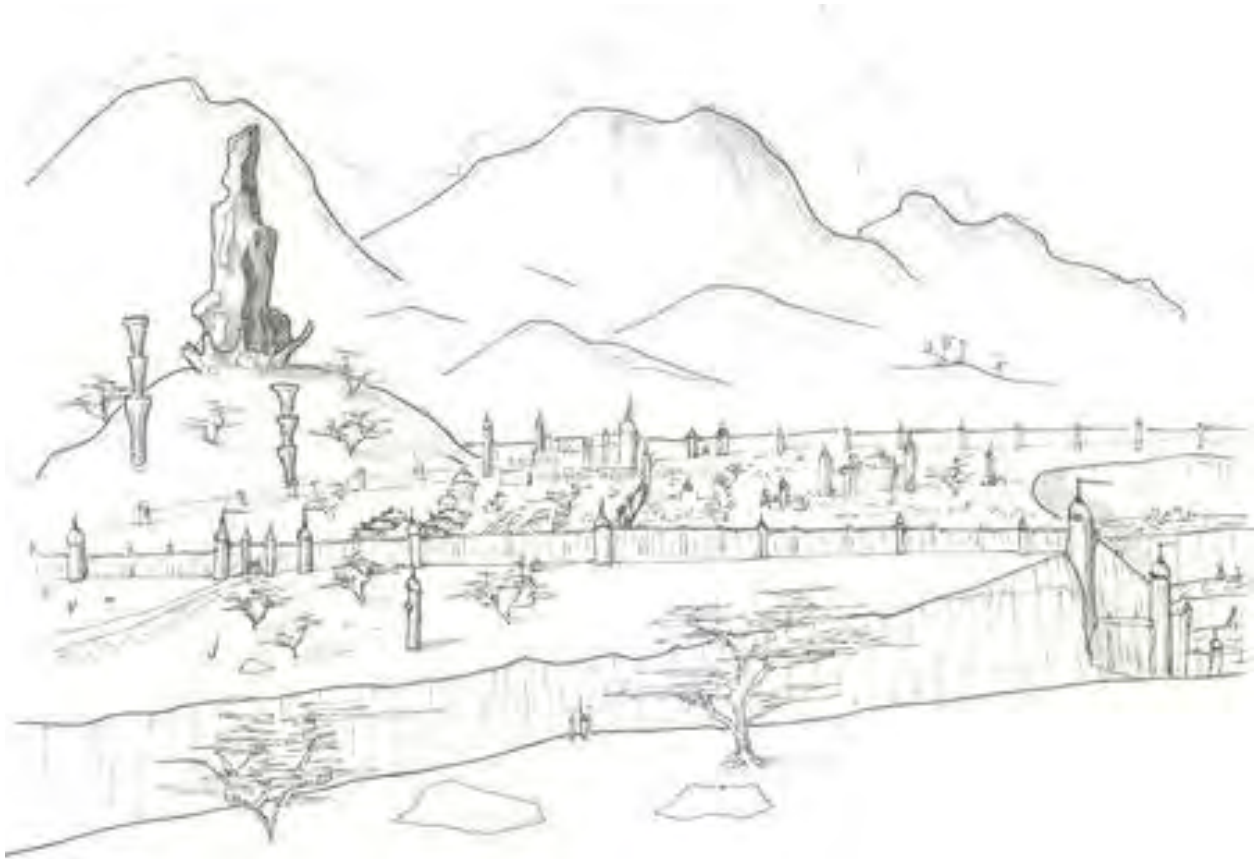
Nearly 10% of the population of Fort Stench is dwarven. The Lime-Burners are a fully dwarvenclave, and eager for

new blood. If you are dwarven, don't be too friendly with an unmarried dwarf of the opposite of sex or you may find yourself under intense pressure to marry



## Guide to Kurn

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### **Approaching the City**

The Banding Slopes are off-limits to travelers; even Kurnans are required to stick to the main road rather than cutting from the scrub plains into the ascending verdant belt. The garrison at Conak's Rock enforces this law on strangers and native Kurnans alike.

While the ground inclines steadily upwards north of Conak's Rock, the road to Kurn continues on in a level manner. The canyon walls rise on both sides of the road, so that by the time they arrive at the gates of Kurn's trade district, travelers are 120 feet beneath the ground level, and Kurn's great gates tower 180 feet overhead.

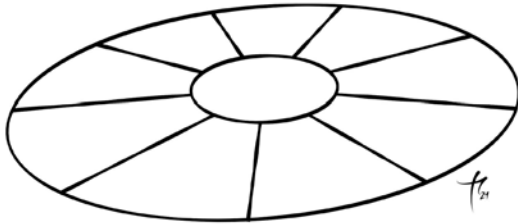
To enter Kurn, you must pass through Kurn's harsh taxing process, the King's Ninth. Although the templars won't offer, you can ask them to hold some of your gear until you leave the city. For a silver piece, they will hold up to a 10 by 10 by 10 foot volume of material until you leave, for a maximum of 75 days. This is the best option if you have valuables that you do not wish to trade in Kurn. Get a written description of the goods you are leaving in the templars' custody. Other than the silver piece, you pay no tax on these items.

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### **Paying the King's Ninth**

The templars bring you to one of the taxing rooms, tell you to stand within a circle on the floor, and to divide the goods that you wish to carry into the city into nine equal parts, according to the pattern (a circle equally divided into nine sections). Be careful and take your time; they like to take advantage of people who think that they can cheat the system.

Although the templars tell you nine equal parts, the templars have the option of declining the goods you place in the sections, and instead taking whatever you have on your person, including your clothing, although if they do this, then they will provide you with a new inexpensive set of clothing.



### **Where to Stay**

Kurn only allows foreigners (or "Drylanders" as they call visitors from the Tablelands) into the Merchant District. The higher quarters of the city are walled off and visitors are rarely allowed access to those parts of the city, and then only when accompanied by a templar. The gigantic, long tents that you first see on entering the trade district are the least expensive lodgings in Kurn. The downside is that you have little privacy and that you have to endure the aroma of delicious foods that probably cost more than you can afford, unless you are willing to work half the day in exchange.

Better, and more expensive, lodgings lie farther away from the district's gates.

### **Where to Board your Mount**

The Teamsters' Clave will offer to take your mounts from you at the city gates and stable them. Accept this offer, since if you refuse it and your mounts trample or eat anyone in the city, the Kurnans will consider you responsible and will fine or enslave you. Once the

Teamsters take charge of your mounts, they are responsible, and they have an excellent reputation.

### **Where to Find Food**

For the wealthy, the Five Quills Inn has the best reputation. At the other end of the economic scale, Kurnan nobles feed their day laborers in addition to paying them.

### **Where to Shop**

They call it the Merchant District for a reason. There is very little here other than shops, inns, taverns, government buildings, and entertainment.

### **Where to Find Magical Components**

Whereas in other cities, templars kill you for possession of magical components, in Kurn the Gray Heralds (Kurn's templars) sell spell components to you at reasonable prices. These templars have a legal monopoly on the purchase and sale of magical components and some other magic items.

### **Where to Get Tattoos and Poisons**

The Barbers' Clave, mostly elves and half-elves, can put you in touch with tattooers and persons who sell black market goods.

Unless you are talking to an elven barber (who reputedly keep their loyal customers' secrets), make sure to specifically ask for "venoms," rather than poisons. Ask for templar permission to bring any sort of ingested, contact, or inhaled poison into Kurn, even if just into the Merchant District. If you ask, the templars may allow you exceptions, such as for ranike, an inhaled poison that only affects insects such as kreen.

If an elf tribe is visiting the area, they will probably have some poisons to sell outside Kurn's gates.

### **Where to Find Work**

Day laborers need only follow the crowd at dawn. They say that it is easier to find day labor than to find someone who would accept a foreigner as a slave.

## *Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains VI.1*

If you are seeking mercenary work, the pickings are slimmer. Inquire with the agents of the various merchant houses in Kurn. While only House Tsalaxa and House Azeth make regular stops in Kurn, several smaller houses have emporiums in Kurn's Merchant District, and pay House Azeth to carry their goods in their Great Caravan. Azeth's emporium in Kurn hires only Kurnans.

If you come bearing books or maps, then make your way to the Great Library, located at the northwest edge of the Merchant District. If the scholars have not seen your book before, and if it interests them, they might offer to buy it or pay you to borrow the book while they transcribe it. Kurnans in the library are generally friendlier than anyone you will meet elsewhere and are especially interested in discussing your travels. The more friends you make in the library, the greater chance you have of gaining access to the more private collections. Additionally, you have a chance to make good impressions on some of the more educated persons in the city and might make the connections necessary to gain employment. Purportedly, some library scholars make occasional visits to ancient ruins, and may need protection.

### **Where to Get Healed**

The Merchant District contains small shrines to Earth, Air, and Water. The priests who tend the shrines will heal patrons for a small donation.

### **Dealing with Officials**

Deal politely with the Gray Heralds. Although the Gray Heralds enforce a steep tax and an invasive

search at the city gates, they are very popular with Kurnan citizens. If you treat the Heralds rudely, you may find yourself in a fight with civilian bystanders and find shop doors shut in your face. Do not bother bribing the Gray Heralds – they just pocket the bribe and do nothing for you.

There are other kinds of templars and officials in Kurn, but they refuse to deal with foreigners.

### **Local Customs**

Do not bring your slaves into Kurn; instead, sell them in front of the gates if you can. While Kurnans have slaves, a master has no right to compel a slave to do anything. Kurnan slaves work for a set period of years and are then free.

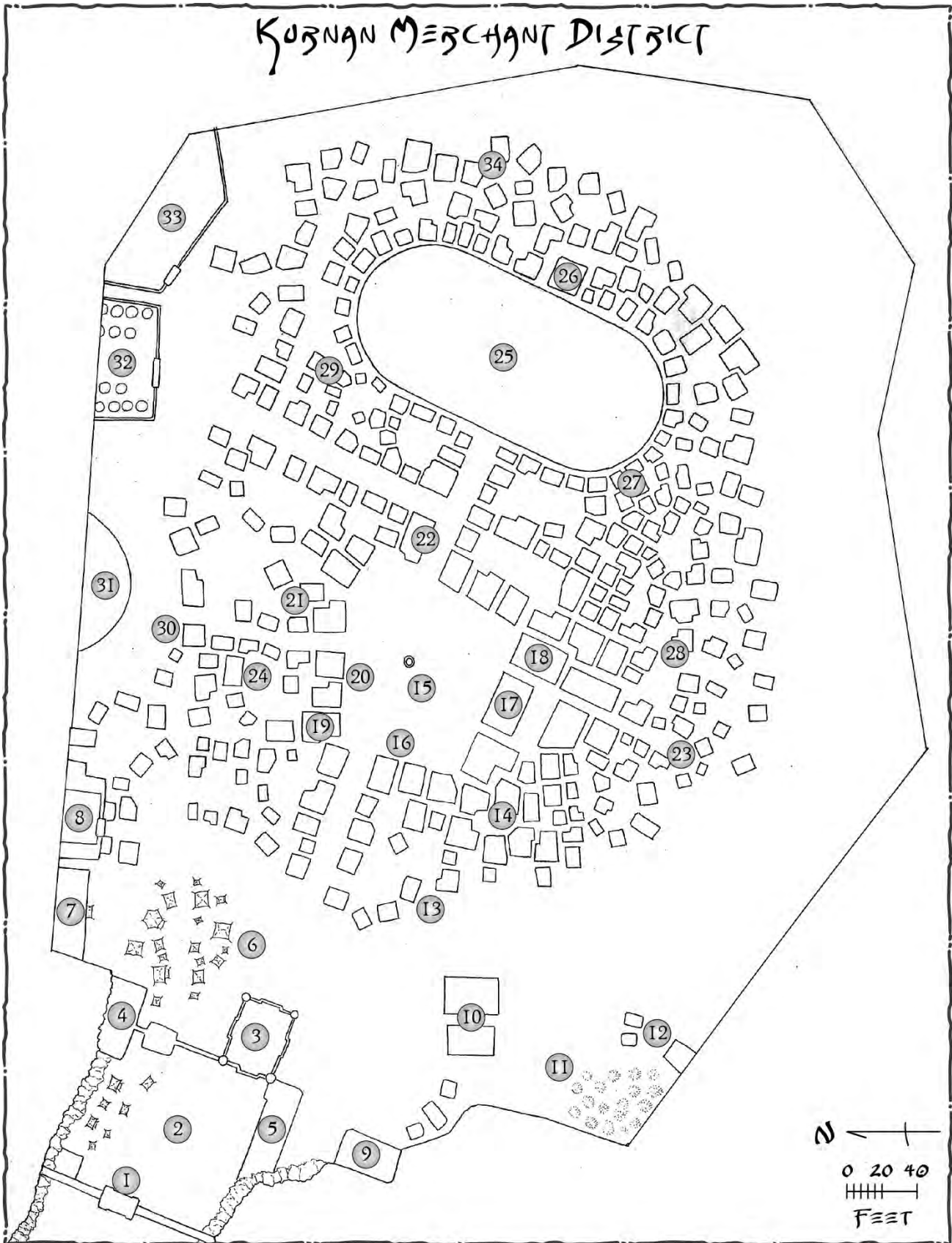
Kurn has no gladiatorial games but some local blood sports involve citizens fighting against animals. Citizens play in a number of somewhat violent but amusing games such as "stilt-boxing" and "scorpion wives", while teams of children play complex and rather dangerous looking games such as wasp relays, and "running bird" - a bizarre game that involves three teams, two catapults, two spears, and seventy two medium-sized birds.

Watch your gear. Some sorts of theft are unpunished in Kurn and killing a thief is a crime.

Do not be careless with magic or psionics. Kurnans believe that with respect to supernatural powers, "incompetence is no excuse for the law." If your spells or powers harm someone, the templars will presume that you did it on purpose.



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## Guide to Silt Side

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### Approaching the Village

Silt Side is difficult to reach, only accessible from a dangerous path through the nearby badlands or via silt ship. The village sees very few visitors, except for House Azeth traders and the Eldaarish Kulag Fleet, who periodically meet here to trade.

### The Village Itself

A former Eldaarish settlement, Silt Side is now little more than low stone walls and exposed foundations. It features a retractable bridge to the Dim Lands (like the one at South Guard), but until recently, the bridge had not been extended for use for generations. A small contingent of House Azeth guards patrol the ruins and keep them clear of bandits for most of the year, but clear out for Flamesky.

### Where to Stay

Visitors to the village can stay wherever they like in the ruins, assuming they come to some sort of agreement with the Azeth guards. Once a season, however, the guards will demand visitors leave the village so that preparations for trade with the Eldaarish can be made.

### Where to Find Food, and Where to Board your Mount

Silt Side never features stables, taverns, or other types of amenities. When House Azeth traders and the Kulag Fleet arrive, they bring their own supplies.

### Where to Shop

The Eldaarish are extremely suspicious, and House Azeth does not allow outsiders to be in the village for fear of spooking their partners and ruining the trade deal. After the trade moot, the Azeth agents might be convinced to trade with visitors once the Eldaarish leave; if so, the visitors would have unparalleled access to Eldaarish goods, including precious metals such as gold, silver, and copper.

### Where to Get Healed

No healing can be had during the trade moot, except perhaps in the most dire circumstances. After the

Eldaarish have withdrawn, healing can likely be arranged from one of Azeth's wind priests.

### Where to Find Magical Components & Poisons

Sorcery and possession of magical components are illegal in Eldaarich, so if House Azeth is smuggling spellbooks and magical components into Silt Side for trade, they're doing a remarkably good job of it, and are unlikely to be willing to trade such goods to anyone but the Kulag. House Azeth doesn't deal in most poisons, but venoms are readily available in both the Trembling Plains and Eldaarich, and both Azeth and the Kulag stock a wide selection of injury-based poisons that are common in their respective lands but difficult for their trade partner to acquire. Much like with other goods, if the House Azeth agents can be convinced to trade with visitors after the Eldaarish leave, a wide selection of normally hard to obtain venoms would be available.

### Where to Find Work

House Azeth only sends their most trusted and well-trained agents and guards to Silt Side, and does not employ unknown individuals for trips to the village for any reason. The Eldaarish will react extremely poorly to visitors, and the Kulag Fleet and Red Guards only employ slaves, not hirelings.

### Dealing with Officials

As previously stated, the House Azeth contingent - led by Corik Azeth himself - in Silt Side won't allow strange visitors to be in the village just before or during the trade moot with the Eldaarish, and are quite firm on this point. After trade with the Kulag is complete, however, the Azeth agents might be much more accommodating for prospective customers. The Kulag are led by High Templar Kerillis herself and do not appreciate surprise visitors. This is even more true of the Red Guards and Savak Order spies that are in attendance to watch for any treachery - especially from the members of the Kulag Fleet themselves.

## Traveler's Guide to South Guard

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### Approaching the Fortress

Do not approach South Guard if you can avoid it, unless you have considerable stealth skills or march at the head of an army. South Guard is a complex of forced labor camps and they are always looking for new blood. Most slaves at South Guard were captured by the Red Guards, but if the Shtas overseers observe any strangers loitering near their gates, they will "recruit" them promptly.

During moonlit nights, slaves continue to work inside the camps.

### The Fortress Gates

The gates remain closed from dusk until dawn. Armored, but generally poorly armed, Shtas overseers patrol the 20 foot walls all day and night.

### Where to Stay

The Shtas keep their slaves in pits, trenches over 1,200 feet long and 15 feet wide, with over a thousand slaves per pit.

### Where to Find Food, and Where to Board your Mount

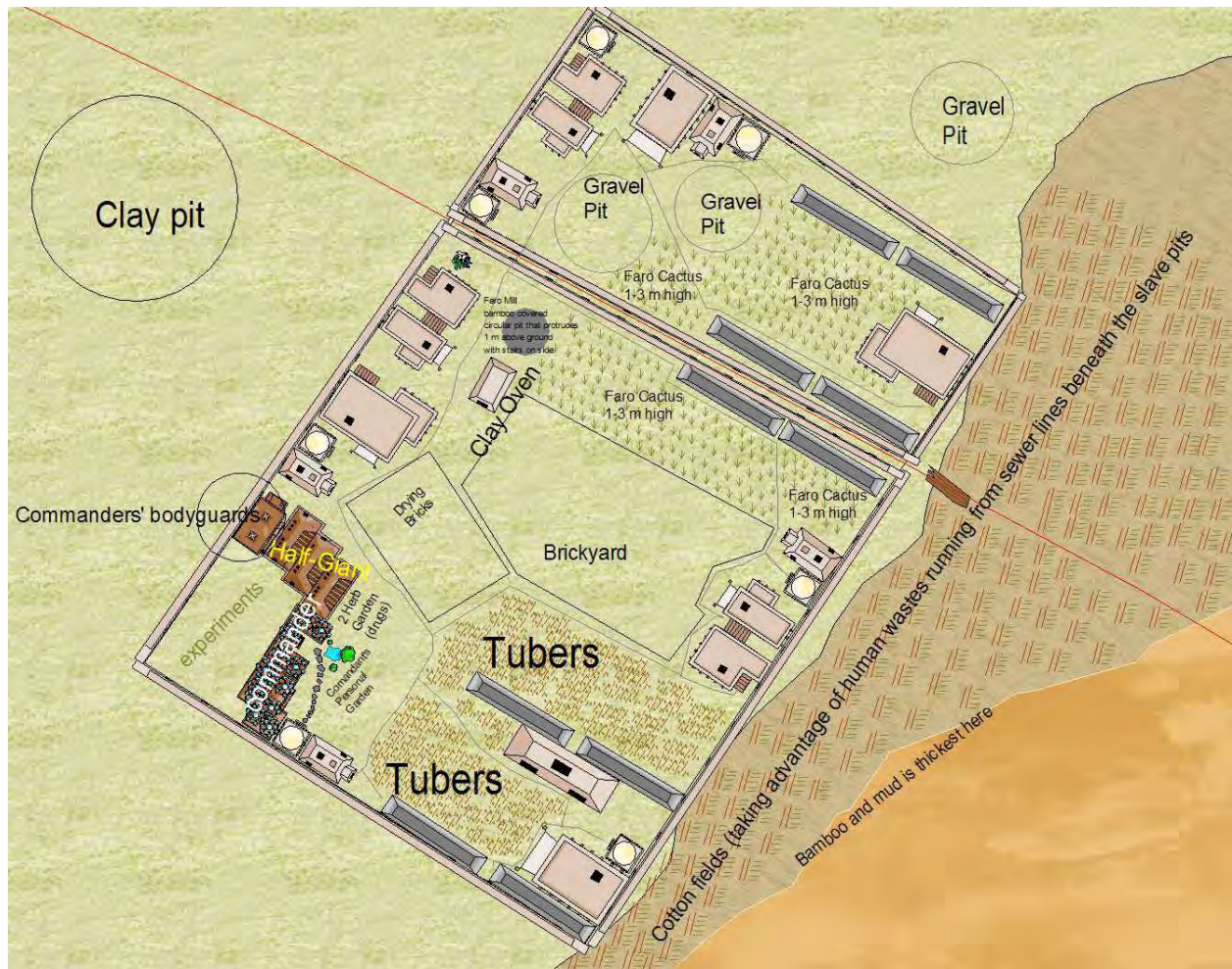
The Shtas will relieve you of your mounts shortly before branding you and throwing you in the pits. If you bring kanks to South Guard, the Shtas will keep them for honey production. Other types of mounts will generally be killed and eaten.

### Where to Shop

It is difficult to shop in South Guard, partly because South Guard has no shops, and partly because the Shtas strip all slaves naked on arrival and periodically search them. Nevertheless, slaves trade favors, weapons, mind-numbing drugs, and even food and water both among themselves and occasionally with guards, although all such trades are severely punished if caught.



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### Where to Find Magical Components and Poisons

The camp commanders' drug production facilities are tended by bards – some of whom are rumored to have access to several types of magical components and poisons.

### Dealing with Officials

Most Shtas guards tend to be much more reasonable one-on-one than in front of other prisoners or guards. Guards are severely flogged for allowing a slave to get away with disobeying them, so the officers and commanders are particularly insistent on being obeyed immediately, without question, at once. Slaves that disobey, question orders, or delay obedience in front of guards, slaves, or multiple officers, tend to get

crucified or skinned alive in order to set an example for others. The same fate awaits guards that disobey superior officers or that attempt to escape.

### Leaving South Guard

The Shtas keep their slaves for seven years. Slaves that survive seven years without attempting to escape are released. The Shtas actually pay their freed slaves a gold piece upon setting them free. Of course, most of the slaves die of exposure, overwork, starvation, or thirst and never see that gold piece. Slaves that attempt to escape generally start their seven years all over again. Slaves that seem hard to control are either put to death in some spectacular way or are transferred to another labor camp – “Camp Zero,” located to the east of South Guard in the Dim Lands. Conditions in Camp Zero are reputedly even worse than those in South Guard and, apparently, no one has ever escaped.



# Lost Cities of the Trembling Plains

By the Pristine Tower Development Group

The Trembling Plains, so called for the thundering herds of mekillots that stam-pede across the plains, are part of a larger region sometimes called the "The Forgotten North" on account of its relative isolation and the "lost cities" of Kurn and Eldaarich. All but unknown to the natives of the Table-lands, this region stretches from the Ringing Moun-tains in the west to the Sea of Silt in the east, and extends from Kurn in the north down to Draj's lands in the south.

This book provides DMs and players with the information they need to include the unique settlements, ruins, and regions of the Forgotten North in their games. It also marks the comple-tion of one of the oldest fan projects from the earliest days of the Burnt World of Athas online community.



Within this book you will find:

- The geography, history, and cultures of the region known as the Forgotten North.
- Descriptions for the five strange seasons experienced by residents of the region.
- Area descriptions and maps for several major settlements, including both settle-ments of the living and ruins occupied only by the undead.
- Player's Guides to key cities and settlements in the region.



[Athas.org](http://Athas.org)

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

This product utilizes material from Dungeons & Dragons books published by Wizards of the Coast.